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Vol. I

MULDOONS VACATION



This work

By TOM TEASER

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MULDOON'S VACATION.

By TOM TEASER,

Author of "A Bad Egg," "Mulligan's Boy," "Nip and Flip," "Jim Jams," "Corkey," "Senator Muldoon," "Muldoon Abroad," "Jimmy Grimes," "Muldoon the Solid Man," "Hildebrandt Fitzgum," "The Deacon's Son," "Skinny the Tin Peddler," "Mulcahy Twins," "Muldoon's Boarding-House," "Muldoon's Brother Dan," "Two in a Box," "Ikey; or, He Never Got Left," "Tommy Tubbs, the Pride of the School," "A Happy Pair," "The Aldermen Sweeneys of New York," "The Jolly Moke; or, Having Lots of Fun," "Our Camping Out Club," "Muldoon the Cop," "Muldoon's Grocery Store," "Mike McGuinness; or, Traveling for Pleasure," "Muldoon, the Sport," etc.

CHAPTER I.

ALL of you, I guess, have read of the famous Terence Muldoon who keeps the famous grocery store in Greenwich avenue, New York; but if you have not, just buy the library recently issued called "Muldoon, the Sport." A perusal of its pages will show you the sort of a citizen and a voter he is."

It was evening.

The evening of a warm June day when Muldoon himself, Mrs. Muldoon, and his son Roger, a lively lad of about seventeen or eighteen years old, were seated in a fashion peculiar to Gotham, outside of the store on chairs.

Muldoon did not seem at all at ease, though one would have supposed he should have been, as he was garbed very coolly in a white linen suit, a collarless shirt and a huge Panama fan which he seemed too really exhausted to wield.

"Bridget," he said to his wife, for by that prosaic first name, which he occasionally softened into Bedalia, he addressed her, "I cannot either sit or stand it."

"What?" queried Mrs. Muldoon, feebly.

"The heat; and what I mane to do is to shake it."

"What?"

"New York."

Mrs. Muldoon looked astonished.

"Shake New York!" she exclaimed.

"Yis."

"Are ye crazy?"

"No. I'm toired av it!"

"And pray what do ye mane to do for a living? What will ye do for money?"

"Won't I sell the grocery?"

Mrs. Muldoon nearly fell from her chair in surprise.

"Sell the grocery!" she ejaculated.

He nodded.

"Yis," he answered, but with a twinkle in his eye, which she did not notice.

"Why?"

"Oh, it don't pay enough, and, besides, it ain't a business I care much about."

"The rayson?"

"It wur bad enough to have the Germans have virtually a picnic on the business, but when I hear that an Eyetalian intends to locate on the block and sell thirty eggs for a quarter, it makes me sick."

"But what do ye mane to do?"

"Afther getting me boodle for the grocery, it is me intenthion to open a doime museum!"

"A doime museum!"

"Yis."

"For Heaven's sake where?"

"At Rockaway. I saw an advertoisement av wan in the paper the other day."

"Terry?"

"Out wid it."

"Will ye do me a favor?"

"What?"

"Let me get ye a pitcher av oiced lemonade."

"Ye can if ye plaze."

"It will do ye good, for I am afraid that ye have been overcome by the heat."

His wife started for the ice water, but he called her back.

"Say, ye niver withering lilac, come back here."

Mrs. Muldoon obediently obeyed.

She returned to her husband's side.

"I wur only fooling," he said, "about parting wid the grocery and buying a museum at Rockaway. But just the same I mane to leave New York and—"

Mrs. Muldoon was about to interrupt him, when he held up his finger warningly.

"Hould yez whist, ould lady," he said, "or I will not communicate to ye the glad toidings. We have all worruked hard this winther."

"So, so, and it is roight ye are."

"Ye have toiled, not exactly loike a galley slave, for I niver wud allow ye to be as menial as that, but many a noight, afther dark, have ye helped me lower flour barrels down the cellar to save me the expense av exthra help, and I have made up me moind to give ye a threat."

Mrs. Muldoon blushed at her husband.

"I only did me duty," she simpered.

"Which, if ivry woman could say the same widout bein' struck down dead, wud rendher this wurruld a Garden av Eden, barring snakes. It is me intenthion to take ye all to the country."

Mrs. Muldoon looked more surprised.

"But can we afford it, Terry?" she asked. "Ain't ye all av the whole day moaning over hard times. Didn't ye go on awfully when I asked ye for me summer suit, and ye tould me that if I kept on in my reckless squandering av money the work-house stared us all in the face?"

"I wur only joking."

"But who will run the grocery?"

"John can take care of it. I guess we can trust him."

The "John" referred to was a stolid clerk who had been with Muldoon for a long while. He was an old bachelor, steady as a clock and lived with the family, being regarded as almost like one of themselves.

Mrs. Muldoon was fascinated with the idea of a brief rural sojourn.

"Where will we go?" asked she, "to Saratogy?"

Muldoon lit a fresh cigar with an air of amazement.

"Saratogy?" repeated he, "ye are getting high flown. No, I will luk in to-morrow's paper at the 'Boarders Wanted.' We want a farm-house."

"Av coarse."

"Ould-fashioned."

"Yis."

"Wid plinty av fruit."

"I love fruit."

"Near the wather."

"It is always healthier near the water."

"Plinty av shade."

"Yis."

"Frish eggs."

"Ivery morning."

"Pure milk."

"Rale crame."

"And it will be so noice to take a walk before breakfast whin the dew is on the grass."

"Iligant!"

"And pluck woild flowers."

"Fine!"

"So to-morrow I will investigate the columns av the papers."

Muldoon kept his word.

He bought the papers the next morning and scanned their contents.

There was an "ad." under the head of "Summer Boarders Wanted" that caught his eye immediately.

No wonder.

It read very temptingly :

"Maple Hill Farm. Only fifty miles from New York. Delightfully situated in the loveliest part of Orange County. All home comforts; fresh milk, eggs and fruit in abundance; shade in abundance; boating and bathing. Address Otis Skinner, Pleasantville, Orange Co., N. Y."

Muldoon wrote to Mr. Skinner.

In return he received a picture of an apparently lovely farm-house.

He was greatly pleased with the photograph, and a correspondence ensued, which ended in the Muldoons engag-

ing board with Mr. Skinner at the low rate of five dollars a week apiece, which, as Mrs. Muldoon said, was dirt cheap, and she could not see what profit the people could make.

The morning when they left New York for their presumably rural paradise seemed to be hotter than all of its predecessors.

Old Sol seemed to have made up his mind to burn, bake and sizzle up the city if possible.

"Howly Heaven!" said Muldoon, as he took off his hat in the coach, while they were crossing the ferry, for they went in style, mind you, with no flies upon them, in a two-horse coach all the way to Jersey City.

"The Pleasantville train you want?" asked the gate-keeper who punched their tickets. "Well, if you want to catch that you will have to scoot."

"We will?" gasped Muldoon.

"Yes."

"How is that?"

"It is just moving out of the depot; but hold on, maybe I can stop it."

Sure enough, they could see a train just retreating from the depot.

The gateman rushed forward.

He had a voice like a steam calliope.

"Hey!" he bawled at the conductor, who was idly swinging on the brake of the rear car.

The conductor heard him.

He could not very well help hearing him unless his ears were stuffed with cotton.

He turned around in obedience to the summons.

"Passengers left!" the gateman bawled.

The conductor pulled the bell-rope.

"All aboard!" he shouted, after the usual agreeable custom of conductors. "Hurry up—lively now."

The Muldoons did hurry.

And it was a fine spectacle they presented.

Muldoon ahead in a white helmet and a Norfolk blouse, Mrs. Muldoon and Roger behind, and all loaded down with baggage.

The conductor assisted them aboard.

"Just in time," he said. "But you nearly got left."

Then he rang the bell-rope and the train started.

"Be heavens, but it wur a toight squeeze. Liquid balls av perspirathion are palpable on me forehead."

As for Mrs. Muldoon, she was too exhausted to speak.

Roger was about as bad; he, too, was tired out.

But they were in the cars, and they were saved.

Presently the conductor came in.

He sat down opposite Muldoon.

"Nearly got left, didn't you?" he asked.

"It wur a close call," panted Muldoon, "and I am much obliged for your stoppage av the thrain."

"That's all right," he answered. "I always do a favor if I can."

"Going to Pleasantville?" he asked.

"Yis," replied Muldoon.

"Got folks there?"

"No."

"Then you ain't visiting?"

"No."

"Going to board?"

"Yis."

"Where?"

"At Mr. Skinner's."

"What Skinner's?"

"Otis Skinner's."

"Go way!"

"It is so."

"Well, I don't envy you."

"Why?"

"He's a caution, that's all."

"How?"

"Oh, he's got too big a heart!"

"Is that so?"

"Yes, but I won't say any more, because it ain't right to talk about your relatives."

"Is he a relative of yez?"

"He's only my uncle, that's all, and if I only had more uncles like him I think I would go West."

"Why?"

"Oh, you'll find out before you've stayed there a week, that is if you stick out so long."

With which enigmatical speech the conductor roamed off.

Muldoon felt puzzled at his words.

"What do ye suppose he meant, Bridget?" he asked.

Mrs. Muldoon had not paid much heed to the conversation.

She was warm.

And sweaty.

And ever and anon she would get a whiff of the rank tobacco from the smoking end of the car.

"He's a young fool," she said, "and don't know what he is doing. They ought to have a man to run a train and not a young bye wid no hair on his face."

Her husband nodded philosophically.

"Afther all ye are roight, as ye always are," he said.

CHAPTER II.

ALL things have a termination, and so it came to pass that after three or four hours had elapsed the affable conductor put his head in the car and yelled:

"Pleasantville!"

The Muldoons arose.

"This way out to the platform," said the conductor, as he indicated a few boards which might by courtesy be called a platform. "All out for Pleasantville! Say!"

"Well?" said Muldoon.

"Here he comes now."

"Who?"

"Otis. Sorry I can't linger and help you greet him."

While speaking he pointed to a road down which a vehicle was slowly crawling.

Off went the cars, and the Muldoon family found themselves on the platform.

A few minutes later and the vehicle drew up in front of the platform.

It was not an equipage calculated to dazzle any person's eyes by its gorgeousness.

It looked like a cross between a hay-rigging and an express wagon, and was drawn by a mule.

The driver, none other than Mr. Otis Skinner himself, was dressed in a negligee fashion.

Coat and vest he had none, and his head was covered by a huge straw hat, which flopped down over his eyes and ears.

Muldoon felt a sort of sinking at the heart as he beheld the spectacle of man, mule and wagon.

Could this be Otis Skinner, of Maple Hall, Pleasantville? He soon found out that it was.

The gentleman in the vehicle signaled to him with his whip, which was simply an ox goad.

"Hey!" he called.

"What?" growled Muldoon.

"Be you Muldoon?"

"That's me name."

"The ones that hev come to board with me?"

"Yis."

"Then jump aboard. My name is Skinner—Otis Skinner—and I kalkerlate we'll try to take good keer of you."

Muldoon hoped so.

But he felt depressed as he gazed at the rig.

"Did not ye have a betther vehicle?" he asked.

Mr. Skinner looked perplexed.

"Better what?" he inquired.

"Vehicle."

"What's that?"

"Wagon."

"Oh!" said Mr. Skinner, with a sigh of relief. "I did not know what you meant. You Yorkers are awful particular. Ain't this good enough? Comfort before style, says I! Come, now, pile in, an' I'll make another trip arter the trunks."

There was no help for it.

They "piled" in.

The seats were simple and unostentatious.

They consisted of rough boards laid from side to side of the wagon.

Muldoon and Roger took the back board, while Mrs. Muldoon rode in the seat of honor alongside of the landlord.

"All ready," warned Mr. Skinner. "You had better hold on there behind."

"Why?" queried Muldoon.

"'Cos the road is a little rough."

They found out before they had gone half of a mile that their Jehu spoke the unvarnished truth.

Rough!

Rough was a mild way to put it.

It was filled with ruts and loose stones, and every time they met with one of these obstacles Muldoon felt as if his liver was being jolted out of him.

"Bedad!" he said, or rather choked, "if this ain't rough. Talk about——"

The sentence was never finished.

The reason was excellent.

One of the wheels of the wagon struck an unusually large-sized rock.

A rock, in fact, which was nearly a boulder.

It just so happened that Muldoon had for the second let go of the sides of the chariot.

The result came well-nigh being disastrous.

Losing his balance, he fell over backwards, and disappeared from view.

No sooner did he behold the casualty than Roger raised an outcry.

"Man overboard!" he bawled.

Mrs. Muldoon heard him.

She turned around.

"Did you shout, Roger?" asked she.

"Yes."

"What's the matter?"

"Dad's gone."

"Gone!"

"Yes."

"Where?"

"Out of the wagon."

"What did he get out of the wagon for?"

"He couldn't help it."

"He couldn't?"

"No."

"And why?"

"He got fired out."

"Fired out?"

"Yes. Can't you tumble? He let go of the seat."

"The fool!"

"And got spilled in the road. He's lying there now, waiting, I guess, for somebody to pick him up."

"But he may be hurt?"

"Very likely he is!"

Mrs. Muldoon grabbed Mr. Skinner by the arm.

"Whoa!" she cried.

Mr. Skinner looked aghast.

"Gosh darn it!" he said, "what do you mean by jerking my arm that way? You might have made me upset the mule."

"Terry!"

"Who's he?"

"My husband."

"Oh, your old man?"

"Yes."

"What aile him?"

"He's fell out into the road."

Mr. Skinner pulled the mule up with a vicious jerk.

"Consarn him!" he said, "I told him to hold fast. Seems to me Yorkers ain't got no more sense than pigs. I suppose he has broken his neck, and it would serve him right."

However, the wagon came to a stand.

They were about to dismount, but they were saved the trouble.

Slowly and with evident pain Muldoon arose.

"Hould on!" he cried, "I guess that I can stagger to the chariot."

He did so.

With assistance he was helped in.

"Are ye hurt?" queried his better-half.

"Not much," came the reply. "I only think that I have fracthured me back, and all av me lungs."

"Waal," advised Mr. Skinner, "get back to your seat."

"I'll be hanged if I do."

"Why not?"

"I've got enough av it."

"What will you do, then?"

"Roide in the wagon."

Mr. Skinner grinned.

"I wouldn't."

"Why not?"

"It ain't got no springs."

"What av it?"

"You will be jolted to bits."

"I'll risk it."

Mr. Skinner grinned again.

Broader than ever.

"All right," chuckled he; "you're boss of yourself. Get up, Beauty."

"Beauty"—which was the aristocratic name of the mule—moved on.

Muldoon found that riding on the floor of the wagon was not all that his fancy had painted it.

He was nearly shaken to pieces.

But he gritted his teeth, and never made a moan. Grit will tell.

At last, when he thought they had ridden about five hundred miles, Mr. Skinner suddenly turned to the right, and drove up a narrow lane.

The lane terminated in a barn-yard.

With an air of pride Mr. Skinner pointed to a house.

It was a dandy of a house.

It had not been painted for years, and it looked on the verge of falling down.

Some parts of it were propped up with poles.

"There you be!" uttered Mr. Skinner, in tones of exultation. "There is the finest summer resort in all Orange County."

One glance at the magnificent *chateau* (?) was enough for Muldoon.

He felt a nausea at his stomach.

"Help me out!" he called.

"Hey, Jim!" bawled the owner of Maple Hill.

In response a sort of animated male conundrum, who might have been nineteen, shambled out from the barn.

Muldoon noticed that, despite the heat, the apparition was shaking like a leaf.

"What ails him?" he asked.

"Nothing," replied Mr. Skinner, "it is only his day for the shakes."

"The shakes!"

"Yes."

"Chills and fever?"

"That's 'em."

Here was another sockdologer for Muldoon.

To leave the city for health and move into what might prove a perfect hot-bed of fever and ague.

"I thought," he indignantly exclaimed, "that you said it was one of the healthiest spots in Orange County."

"So it is," answered Mr. Skinner, with an air of mild reproach. "You don't mind a little tech of fever and ager? Does you good; purifies your blood. I'll give you all the quinine you want and not charge a penny extra. Oh, Jim, get a move on you. Come, help this gentleman out of the wagon."

Thus ordered, Jim came forward. Although he was

suffering from malaria, he managed to jump Muldoon out of the wagon in a way which he might have considered gentle, but which was muchly the reverse.

He landed Muldoon on the ground with a bump that made his sore back wince.

"Thanks, me man," he sarcastically asked. "What do ye take me for, a bag av potatoes?"

The other made no reply.

His teeth were performing such a song-and-dance that really he could not have replied if he wanted to.

Mr. Skinner headed the procession to the front stoop. It was already occupied.

By a lady.

A lady who seemed to be about seven feet high and who was the reverse of beautiful. Her hair was red, none of your Titian Madonna like red that poets rave about, but a red so lurid that it almost seemed as if you could set a match on fire by applying it to her luminous capillary covering.

"Sal!" he yelled, "here's our boarders. Sal is my wife."

Mrs. Skinner acknowledged the introduction by a duck of her head.

"Glad to see you," she said. "S'pose you are tired, ain't you?"

The Muldoons assented.

In chorus.

"Just walk into the parlor," she said, "and I'll open the shutters."

She did so.

Then she ushered them into the parlor.

It was like the majority of country parlors, which never being opened all of the year around except on occasions like marriages, funerals, and when company comes, is calculated to impress the most hilarious with a sense that there is a hereafter, and any ill-timed jocularity would be out of place.

The furniture consisted of a stiff sofa which frowned at the visitors, a trio of chairs of equally pleasing appearance, and a melodeon.

Also were there two pictures, one of General Washington and the other of Abraham Lincoln, which seemed to glare defiance at each other from opposite sides of the wall.

"Now just sit down till I get supper, because I know you must be hungry."

Left to themselves, our party looked in speechless surprise at one another until Muldoon sank down on the sofa.

"Bedad," he gasped, "if this don't bate Bannagher, who, ye all know, wur a very hard man to bate."

Mrs. Muldoon tried one of the chairs.

Her face became almost as equally dismal as that of her husband.

"Me chair," said she, "is filled with saw-dust."

As for Roger, he preferred to sit down standing up.

"Well," he finally said, "if this ain't pie. It seems to me, pop, that this place is as cheerful as a grave-yard."

Muldoon shuddered.

"Bedad," he said, "I will be only too thankful if I lave here widout being planted in wan."

CHAPTER III.

THEIR meditations were disturbed by the re-entree of Mrs. Skinner.

"Supper," said she.

Anything for a relief.

The parlor had taken away whatever appetite they had, but they followed meekly on behind Mrs. Skinner.

She led them down a crooked flight of stairs to the basement.

The basement had originally been a cellar, but Skinner had transmogrified it into a dining-room by the simple process of whitewashing it and putting in a table and the necessary chairs.

The cloth which covered the table looked as if it had done service for years.

Mrs. Skinner apologized for its appearance.

"You see," she said, "we wasn't quite sure you'd come, and so we did not fix up much, and we just scrambled up a sort of supper. Jane?"

"Yes'm," answered a voice from what was the kitchen.

"Bring on supper."

There was a shuffle of feet and a girl entered.

Her eyes were crossed.

She only owned one tooth.

She was a suitable domestic for the Skimmers.

In she came with a tray on which were some articles of sustenance.

"Be careful with them, Jane," she said, sharply. "See if you can put all of the dishes on the table without dropping them."

She giggled.

In an idiotic style.

"I guesses I kin," she said.

She tried to.

But somehow or another she stumbled.

Down she went, tray and all.

The dishes flew in all directions.

A cup of scalding hot tea flew down Muldoon's neck.

Mrs. Muldoon received a cup of tea also over her travelling costume.

Roger got off lucky.

A bowl of gravy only emptied itself over his nice new pantaloons.

Muldoon sprang to his feet as agilely as his lame back would allow him to.

"Be heavens!" he yelled, in wrath, "what does this mane?"

Mrs. Skinner scowled fiercely at the unlucky Jane.

"Git!" she ordered.

Jane did.

She faded with alacrity.

"Drat the girl!" Mrs. Skinner uttered, "but at times she can't help it."

"Help what?" growled Muldoon.

"Having fits!"

"Fits?"

"Yes. But she is perfectly harmless. She's a nice girl, but she is unfortunate."

"I should say so."

"Yes. 'Sides having fits, she walks in her sleep."

"Shure, she must be a valuable servant. If I had her do ye know what I wud do?"

"What?"

"Kill her!"

"But, you see, I can't."

"Why not?"

"She is bound out to me by the county, and all she costs me is her keep. I'm awful sorry, but I'll get you some crackers and cheese."

She did.

The cheese was rank, and the crackers moldy.

"Could—could ye let us have some milk to wash it down with?" timidly asked Mrs. Muldoon.

"Very sorry," said she, "but we just sent all of it to the creamery. But I kin give you some condensed milk, if you wish, only I don't think you will like it."

"Why?"

"'Cos it is full of flies, and I think it is sour."

"I guess I'll pass," remarked Muldoon, and the rest of the "boarders" followed his example.

"Now," said the female head of the family, "if you want to go to bed, you kin."

Muldoon looked at his wife.

She nodded assent.

Might just as well to bed as anywhere else.

"Have ye a lamp?" asked he.

She said "no."

"Servants are so careless," she explained, "I can't trust 'em with lamps. I let Jane have a lamp once, and she fell down in a fit and nearly set the house on fire, 'cos the lamp exploded, so I allus use candles."

"Bring on the candles," Muldoon said.

She did.

The candles had novel holders.

They were turnips.

"You see," she explained, "we are all out of candlesticks till Otis goes to town, and so I just thought these would do for to-night."

"Anything," groaned Muldoon.

They arrived at their rooms.

The rooms were splendid (?)

There was no carpet on the floor of either room, and Muldoon's room, from which Roger's opened off, was about the size of a prairie.

The furniture consisted of a bed, a rickety sofa and two chairs.

Stay, we will not malign the *boudoir* too much.

There was a bureau with a cracked glass, likewise a bowl in which a pitcher of dirty water rested.

It may be that the fair cicerone noted that they were not pleased from the doleful expression of their faces.

Apologetically she said:

"Me and Otis will try to fix it up better in the morning."

"For Heaven's sake do!" replied Muldoon, in crushed accents, as he put his candle down on the bureau and she left the salon.

Muldoon sank down on the bed.

"Bridget?" he asked.

"What?" whimpered Mrs. Muldoon.

"Ye had the neuralgia the other night, did ye not?"

"Yis."

"Ye tuk laudanum to aise yez pain?"

"I did."

"Where is the vial?"

"Av what?"

"Laudanum."

"What do ye want it for?"

"Can't ye guess?"

"No."

"Thin it is very obtuse av apprehension ye must be."

"Why?"

"Me loife is insured, and having left ye everything, I have concluded I moight as well be buried here as anywhere else."

She had heard him talk that way before, and was not at all alarmed at the possibility of his making a cold corpse out of himself.

"Well," she said, "we are here, and I suppose we will have to stay here."

"Till when?"

"For a week, anyhow."

Muldoon demurred.

"I'll be blessed if I stay more than two days," he said.

"But ye will."

"Why?"

"Let's see ye promenade."

Muldoon tried to.

He succeeded in making a very dismal attempt.

His wife noted that he walked with pain,

although he tried hard to conceal it.

"Ye can't be moved for a day or two, anyway, for the

fatigue of the railroad journey back home moight lead to

yez death."

At this juncture Roger came in.

He looked disgusted.

"Say, pop?" he said, addressing his father.

"What is it?" growled Muldoon.

"I want a dollar."

"What for?"

"To go home."

"Why?"

"I'm tired of my room."

"What ails it?"

"It's too rich for my blood."

"How?"

"Why, it has a window about as big as a postage stamp,

and guess the bed I have got?"

"It is lucky ye ain't got to sleep on the floor."

"I might just as well."

"Why?"

"They've given me a shake-down."

"What's that?"

"An old straw bed, a pillow and a sheet. And it's

alive."

"Aloive?"

"Yes, sir."

"What wid?"

"Bugs."

"Well," counseled Muldoon, philosophically,

"ye will

have to thry to plaster yesilf against the wall and grin

and bear it. Have ye a cigarette?"

"No."

"Here, take wan."

He handed, as he uttered the last sentence, a cigarette to his son.

This was such an unexpected civility that Roger retreated.

"If the bugs bother ye," was the parting advice he received, "burn thim wid the loighted ind av the pony cigar. Good-night."

Having thus disposed of his son and heir, he shut the door.

After considerable difficulty they raised the window.

It was a task of some difficulty, but finally he accomplished it.

"Now," said he, "to retoire, and to slape if we can."

It was easy enough to make the wish, but it was doomed not to eventuate.

At least not for several whiles.

Mrs. Muldoon retired to the bed, but Muldoon concluded he did not feel sleepy.

"I'll sit up for a little while," he said, "and smoke."

"Do as ye plaze," his wife answered, for she was completely tired out with the experience of the day, and felt completely fatigued.

He found a chair.

At least, it was an apology for a chair, being made, country fashion, out of a flour barrel, sliced down about one-third—the head, of course, being removed and a seat put in—a cheap and economical way, quite common in some rustic regions, and which, when covered with calico, makes a quite presentable substitute for a chair.

Muldoon occupied it.

It was a hard seat.

But decidedly better than none at all.

He sat down by one of the windows.

After considerable effort he found his vest.

Likewise a cigar.

Fate was against him as usual.

The cigar was broken.

He patched it up as well as he could with a piece of paper he found on the floor, and proceeded to try to light it.

After several efforts he succeeded.

For a wonder the weed drew.

It puffed freely.

"Aster all," he soliloquized, "things moight be worse, but not very much. I wud almost wish I wur back to the ould grocery again. Ye cannot rely on help aster all. Me clerk and his friends may have pawned the grocery and hung out a red flag for a sheriff's sale. But it will never do to borrow trouble ixcept trouble troubles ye. Take things always by the smooth handle, ixcept the article moight be a flat-iron reposing on a red-hot stove. In such a casualathy me advoice would be not to violate its seclusion."

CHAPTER IV.

HIS musings were not long so self-complacent.

Suddenly an object flew in one of the open windows.

It came with a whirr.

It was alive and had wings.

Its sudden appearance caused Muldoon to fall from his chair.

To him it looked as large as a porpoise.

Whirr!

Whirr!

Around the room flew the intruder.

Muldoon picked himself up in a hurry.

Whirr!

Whirr!

The noise of flapping of wings did not serve to render him any less agitated.

By the dim light of the Pleasantville chandelier (?) he beheld what to his excited imagination appeared to be a ferocious monster on wings.

The creature flew around the room in a dazed sort of way, bumping against the ceiling and walls.

"It is a vamptire bat, wan av these bastes that come to get into yez room, nestle in yez hair and thry to suck the dandruff and blood out av ye. I will be wary until I reach me pantaloons. I have a gun there that will rid the wurruld av it."

Getting down ol' his hands and knees, he crawled toward his clothes.

From his pantaloons hip-pocket he secured what he called his "gun."

Really it did look more like a so called gun than it did like a revolver.

At last he got the bead, as he conjectured, on his nocturnal visitant.

He pulled the trigger.

Bang!

Bang!

Bang!

He was not contented with firing once, but he blazed away three times.

The next minute the air was full of sulphurous smoke.

A howl came from the bed.

It proceeded from Mrs. Muldoon.

"Oh, Terry!" she yelled, "what is it?"

"Nothing but a vamptire bat I shot at."

She leaped out of bed.

"Burglars!" she promptly yelled.

"Shut up!" he ordered.

"Fire!"

"Do ye think I wud shoot at a foire?"

"But ye shot at something?"

"I did."

"What wur it?"

"I think it was a vamptire bat!"

"What's that?"

"A product av South America, from whence it ought to have emigrated niver."

"Is it harmful?"

"Is it? It shows that your acquaintance wid Unnatural Histhory must be decisively neglected. Do you know that it is a fearful insect?"

"Is it?"

"Yis."

"What does it do?"

"Its atrocity is unlimited."

"But that ain't saying what it does."

"Had it reached yez couch it wud at wanst have nestled in yez hair."

"It wud?"

"Yis."

"What for?"

"For its own carnivorous purposes."

"What does carnivorous mane?"

"Flesh ating is his hobby. He wud fasthen his talons in yez hair and sucked yez blood."

"Ye don't mane it!"

"Yis."

"What for?"

"Bekase it is a family failing, I suppose."

Just then Roger came rushing in from the other room.

"What's up, dad?" he asked.

"Not much," came the rejoinder, "only I have, perhaps, saved all av our loifes."

"What?"

"It's so."

"How?"

"By shooting a monsther."

"A dragon, I suppose?"

"No, a vamptire bat."

"Get out!"

"It's so."

"How do you know?"

"The corpse ye will foind on the floor."

"Nonsense."

"Go see."

Rap!

Rap!

Rap!

Three summons for admission were given on the outside of the door.

"Who is it?" asked Muldoon.

"It's me."

"Mr. Skinner?"

"Yes."

"What do ye want?"

"To come in."

"What for?"

"Wasn't you firing off a cannon?"

"No."

"What then?"

"I shot at a vamptire bat."

"What's that?"

"It wud take me too long to explain now. Wait till we get some clothes on and make ourselves presentable." In a few moments he opened the door. Their landlord entered.

He was arrayed in a decollete costume of an old army overcoat, and armed with an army musket.

"What's up?" he queried.

"Didn't I hear shootin'?"

"Ye did."

"Gosh, you wuzn't firing at a burglar, was you?"

"No."

"What then?"

"I have massacred a vamptire bat."

"What's that?"

"I ain't got time to explain now. Come and help me pick it up."

Mr. Skinner complied.

He flashed the rays of a lantern which he held under one arm along the floor.

Presently he beheld a feathered object limp on the floor.

He held it up to the lantern's rays.

"Great gosh!" exclaimed he, in genuine surprise, "guess what you've done!"

"What?"

"You've killed a vampire bat, or what you may call it, in your mind."

"But I killed something."

"Of course you did. It is one of my best pouter pigeons, and of course you'll do what's square."

"What's that?"

"Pay for the pigeon."

This request seemed reasonable enough.

Muldoon had not the slightest idea of what pigeons were worth.

He supposed about fifty cents a pair.

"All roight," said he. "I suppose I did kill the birrud. How much is it worth?"

"Five dollars," replied Mr. Skinner, without moving a muscle of his face.

The pigeon-slayer felt his hair stand on end.

Five dollars!

A "V" for a pigeon.

It seemed the acme of rapacious gall.

"Mr. Skinner," he asked, throwing out his chest, "luk me in the eye."

"What for?" the landlord queried, somewhat alarmed at the boarder's attitude.

"Ye will see that I have the lids av me roight eye distended wid me fingers."

"Yes."

"Do ye perceive any grane in thim?"

"No."

"Survey what little is left av me hair."

"Yes."

"Is there any hayseed in it?"

"Not as I know. Why do you ask?"

"Bekase ye must take me for a sucker."

"Why?"

"Bekase I'll be hanged if I'll pay foive dollars for any bloody ould pigeon!"

"But the breed?"

"Hang the bhreed."

"It was the only one I had."

"Don't get another wan."

Mr. Skinner assumed a wheedling tone.

"How much will you give me?" he asked.

"Two dollars."

Two dollars was really double what the fowl was worth, but the offerer of the price did not know the market value.

Sooner, though, than have any words he promised to pay it.

"Waal, I suppose it's the best you can do, but it's hard on a poor man. Kin you pay me in the morning, for I want to buy some oats?"

"Yes," answered Muldoon, feeling a strong impulse to kick the old fraud out of the room.

"Good-night," said Mr. Skinner, in leaving the room.

"Don't forget about the two dollars in the morning."

"I won't," said Muldoon, "I'll write it on the wall with a burnt match. Good-night, ye ould skinflint."

Whether Mr. Skinner heard the last complimentary allusion to him or not we cannot say.

Doubtless he did.

But he deemed it politic to turn a deaf ear to it, and shambled off to his own roost.

Mrs. Muldoon had heard the colloquy.

"Well, he has got a nerve," she said.

"Nerye!" fiercely answered he; "nerve ain't the wurrud for it. It is gall, pure and unadulterated gall. But I'll fix him."

"Ye will?"

"I will."

"How?"

"We'll elope from here loively."

"Ye can't."

"Why not?"

"On account of yez back."

Muldoon gave a groan as he thought of his back.

"There ought to be a docther around here," he said. "Faix, whin they get sick they can't have the nerve to docther thimselfes."

"Yis, they do, the most av them. Do ye recollect me cousin Marie that lives out in Skomhegan, the wan that come to the shore wan day?"

"Yis." "Wid a twin on aich arum?"

"Yis."

"Well, her husband fell sick—no wondher, as they have siven children already—and she thried to docther him herself, poor girl."

"How did she succeed?"

"Not very well."

"Why?"

"She gave her husband rat poison by mistake for a soothing draught. Ye will have no countrhy docther."

"What will I have—a veterinary surgeon?"

"No."

There was a pause for a moment. On the part of Mrs. Muldoon.

"Terry?" she continued, in a wheedling voice.

"What?" asked he.

"Shure yez back I don't think is hurt much. Ye walk better thin ye did."

"That I will own."

"But this is no place for us."

"Bedad, I begin to believe so."

"And soon ye will be able for a removal from here."

"A removal?"

"Yis."

"But where will we go?"

"Where I wanted ye to go."

"Where's that?"

"Saratogy."

"Didn't I tell ye wanst that I can't afford the spa?"

"Terry?"

"Well?"

"Ye won't blame me, will ye, if I make a confession?"

"Av what?"

"Ye were generous to me wid pin-money this winther."

"So I wur. Generosity is me great failing."

"Ye thought I spint it all."

"I don't doubt it, and I have me suspicions that ye knocked down on the till besoides."

"I did nothing av the sort."

"What did ye do?"

"I economized."

"Ye did?"

"I did."

"Get out."

"But I did all av the same. I have saved foive hundred dollars."

Muldoon fairly felt his breath taken away.

"Ye saved foive hundred cases?" gasped he.

"I did."

"Where is it?"

His wife laughed knowingly.

"I've got it safe," said she, "and if we go to Saratogy I'll pay all expenses."

He gazed at his wife in admiration.

"Bedalia, ye chaplet of flowers," he uttered, "I wud go not only to Saratogy, but to the end av the wurruld wid ye!"

CHAPTER V.

MAN proposes.

L'bon Dieu disposes, as the French say.

Next morning Muldoon found out that his afflicted spinal column was worse than ever.

"I am afraid, asther all, Bridget," said he, "that I will have to stay here for a whoile. The fatigue of a journey to Saratogy wud be too much for me now. Asther all, I think, despoite av yez objections, I will send for a docther."

Mrs. Muldoon was a wise woman.

Seeing that her husband was bound on having a doctor, she acquiesced.

"All roight," she remarked. "To plaze ye I will send for one."

She was as good as her word.

Jim, the farm-hand, was dispatched for the medical man, while Muldoon had his breakfast in bed.

Mr. Skinner himself brought it up.

It was a miniature banquet in what is slangily called "your mind."

It consisted of a piece of salt mackerel, all dried up and charred, a cup of muddy coffee and a plateful of pilot biscuit.

But stay! No waiters are likely to be found in Saratogy.

Let us do Mr. Skinner credit.

There was a dish filled with cucumbers and onions, fairly swimming in vinegar.

The cucumbers were withered.

The onions were rank.

Muldoon looked at the meal.

"Say!" he yelled at its bearer.

"What?" answered Mr. Skinner.

"What do ye call this?"

"Breakfast."

"Breakfast?"

"Yes."

"Do ye call that a breakfast?"

"Of course. What ails it?"

The cool cheek of the question almost took Muldoon's breath away.

"Ye ought to be arrested as a fraud," he observed.

"What for?" placidly asked Mr. Skinner.

"Ye promised us fresh eggs."

"Yes."

"Where are they?"

"I just sold a couple of dozen to the peddler."

"Milk?"

"It went to the creamery."

"Where's the fruit?"

"Ain't none yet. Apples ain't come. And say?"

"Well?"

"Jim's went for the doctor for you, hain't he?"

"Yis."

"That will be a dollar, 'cos I can't afford to lose his time."

"All roight!" groaned Muldoon. "Put it on the bill."

The doctor could not have had an alarming practice, because he soon arrived.

He was a little man with a fiery head of hair, and he wore a pair of green spectacles almost as large as himself.

Mr. Skinner introduced him.

"Mr. Muldoon," he said, "Dr. Killquick, and he's a good 'un. He set the leg of my cow wot fell down, and she don't limp hardly now."

"Pleased to see you," gravely said the docter. "Allow me to have the pleasure of examining you."

The others retreated.

He and the doctor were left alone.

The doctor heard the particulars of his tumble.

He shook his head gravely.

"You need rest," he avowed.

"But I don't want rest."

"You must have it."

"Why?"

"Because I would not guarantee your life as worth two weeks' purchase if you tried to change your quarters."

"But I must."

"Why?"

"I want to go to Saratoga."

The doctor grew grave.

"Man," he said, "dismiss that hallucination from your mind. A journey to Saratoga will kill you."

He spoke very earnestly.

Muldoon believed him.

"When will I be able to go?" asked he.

The reply was very consolatory.

"In about a month, if you take care of yourself. I will send you around a plaster to-night."

"Thanks, and now, docthur—"

"Yes."

"Now to the milk in the cocoanut. How much do I owe you?"

"Only a trifle."

"But what is it?"

"Four dollars."

Muldoon felt like using his revolver again.

"Four dollars?"

"Yes."

"What for?"

"Yes."

Nothing, in fact, as he could see, except a promise of plasters and the bracing intelligence that he could not be moved for a month.

He paid the physician, ~~and wot no friend could afford~~.

All in silver dollars. Every one of which the dispenser of plasters bit and rang carefully on the bureau.

"Are they good?" he queried.

"I wish I had a million of them."

"Well, I'll come to-morrow."

"Don't!"

"Why?"

"Bekase I think I will not need yez services if the plasters prove as beneficial as ye say."

The doctor looked saddened.

He had expected to be called in to the family constantly, and had calculated on having a regular patient in Muldoon.

"Well," he said, "if you might be taken again, don't hesitate to send for me."

"I will," rejoined the patient, dryly.

About four o'clock that afternoon the plasters arrived. The doctor did not bring them himself.

He was wiser.

He had had one exhibition of Muldoon's temper, and had concluded that it would be safer to send them by substitute.

The substitute was a diminutive coon.

A little darky about ten years of age.

"Youse Mr. Muldoon?" he asked, as he entered.

"Yes," he shouted. "What do ye want?"

"Heah dey is."

"What?"

"Dem plastahs dat de doctah sent for youse back."

"Throw them on the floor."

Affrighted at his tones, the darky did so, and retreated very precipitately.

"What do you mane," indignantly asked his wife, "by spaking to the naygur that way?"

"I'll not put them on at all."

"Why not?"

"How do I know what their rudiments may be?"

Mrs. Muldoon smiled.

One of those sneering, aggravating smiles which only a woman can bestow and makes him feel worse than if she had hit him with a club.

"I guess now ye wish we had wint to Saratoga," she said.

"Bridget," he said, in determined accents, "ye have got to pause in yez insinuathions."

"What insinuathions?"

"Saratoga."

"But I wanted to go there all along."

"Wid willingness wud I go, but I can't."

"Why not? Ain't I got the money?"

"But I can't be moved. Did not the docthor say so?"

And it is very little stock I take in that docthor. He is as loight as a cork."

"But ye have the plasters and ye must put one on. It is nothing but wasting money to buy plasters widout using them."

"Oh, for Heaven's sake," wailed he, "I will put them both on and sind out for more. Where's Roger?"

"I haven't seen him for an hour."

"Well, I bet he is up to some mischief."

"Ye are too hard on the poor bye, Terry. He's viewing the scenery."

"And it is a prodigious lot he cares for scenery. He wud not thrade off a mutton-pie for all the scenery on the Rhoine. But I think I hear his step now."

He was right.

His son soon entered.

With a loitering step.

He did not seem to care much about facing his parents. Muldoon noticed the lack of alacrity in his son's progress.

"Yez walk," sharply he said, "and—howly heavens, where have ye been?"

He had good reason for the interrogation.

Roger was a sight.

He was covered with mud from head to heels.

"Where have ye been?" bellowed Muldoon.

"Out with Jim," replied Roger.

"Jim?"

"Yes."

"Who's he?"

"The hired man."

"The man wid the chills?"

"Yes."

"Where did you go with him?"

"He asked me to go with him down to the brook and get a pail of water with him."

"Yis, and I can read the rest av the tale in yez eyes. Ye fell in it."

Roger hung his head.

"I'll own I did," he confessed.

"How did ye manage it?"

"There was a plank across the brook."

"Yis."

"Jim dared me to walk it."

"Ye thried to do it?"

"I did."

"And ye fell in."

"How do you know?"

"Bekase ye are just fool enough to do so. Luk at yez clothes."

"They ain't hurt much."

"They ain't?"

"No. I guess the mud will dry off."

"But they are torn?"

"Only a little rip."

"I am glad to hear it. It will occupy yez spare toime sewing it up. I gave ye a two-dollar bill this morning, did I not?"

"Yes, sir."

"Hand it back."

"What for?"

"Ye ain't safe to be thrusted wid money."

Reluctantly the lad handed it over.

But it cut him to the heart to do so.

"Here it is," said he.

Muldoon pocketed it.

"Now retoire somewhere, and thry to fix yesilf up. Ye luk loike a ragamuffin."

Roger retreated, but he felt that his father was unnecessarily harsh toward him.

"Didn't he fall out of the wagon?" he soliloquized; "and it was all of his own fault. I'll get square on him!" But this threat remained unexpressed.

While in the room he had noticed those two thrown away plasters.

A sudden idea of revenge came to him.

"I'll get square on the old man, see if I don't," he muttered.

After making himself as presentable as he could, he went back to his old people's room.

He had managed to fix himself up quite well.

Muldoon, who could not stay mad at any one long, greeted his appearance with a pleasant look.

"Well, ye have done quite well," he said, "and maybe, if ye behave yeislf, I may give ye part av yez money back."

"Thanks," demurely said Roger.

Just then the bell rang for supper.

Mrs. Muldoon went down to it.

Muldoon did not.

Roger went too.

But he did not go empty-handed.

Before he left the room he managed, unperceived, to swipe one of his father's plasters, which he put under his coat.

Supper was about on a par with the other meals.

It consisted of crackers and cheese, weak tea, some alleged preserves and some biscuits, which were hard enough to crack the teeth of an elephant, and pie—oh, such pie! full of flies and cockroaches and dirt.

However, he did not care for the meal.

He only had one object in view.

That was to charm away the cayenne pepper bottle.

He succeeded in so doing.

Then he went out to the barn and sprinkled it over with pepper.

The pepper was almost of the same hue as the contents of the plaster, and no one but a close observer would have noticed that any foreign ingredient had been placed in it.

He dosed the surface of the plaster with the pepper, and the plaster looked about the same as it originally did.

He returned up-stairs.

His father was on another crank.

His supper had not pleased him and his mood was anything but beatific.

"Oh, if I wur only out av this hole," he exclaimed, "niver wud ye catch me away from me grocery. Oh, I wud give a hundred dollars to be out av this den!"

"Maybe the plaster will afford ye relief," ventured Mrs. Muldoon.

"Thim?"

"Yis."

" Didn't I chuck them away?"

" Where?"

" Somewhere on the flure."

" Shall I try to find them?" asked Roger.

" Yis, I suppose, if ye can, for I don't know where I flung them."

It was dusk.

No lights had arrived yet.

Roger found it easy to pretend to pick the doctored plaster from the floor.

This he found it easy to do in the growing darkness.

" Here you are, pop," he said; " just take mother's advice and put it on."

" Oh, confound ye, if both get at me I must yield. Where's a loight? Give me a cannon."

" What for?"

" As there are no electric bells in this hotel, I mane to shoot it off."

" What for?"

" To wake him up and have some sort av an illuminating procured."

" Here he comes now."

They listened.

Sure enough there came a knock at the door.

" Inther!" invited Muldoon.

Roger's surmise was correct.

Mr. Skinner entered.

Mr. Skinner's face bore the air of a man who was performing a highly virtuous deed.

" Here," said he, " I will leave the stable lantern with you. I have just closed the stable up and brought it in to you."

Certainly the new light was a great improvement over the candles and turnip chandeliers of the previous evening.

" Thanks," said Muldoon.

" Oh, I'll get you to rights just as soon as I get you settled down. Wait till you see the breakfast I'll fix for you to-morrow."

" What?"

" Strawberries."

" That's good."

" Cream."

" Bettah yet."

" New potatoes."

" Foine."

" And I'll try to get some better coffee, and let Mrs. Skinner make it herself. And say—"

" Yis."

" Would you like some watercresses?"

" Wud I? Yis."

" Then I'll get Jim to pick a lot airy in the morning, and we'll have them served up with the dew fresh on them, and covered with pepper an' salt."

Muldoon could not help smacking his lips.

The promised morning's repast seemed all that any one could desire for a simple matutinal meal.

" That is good enough for any man," he said.

" I guess so," Muldoon answered.

" Yes, sir. You would be lucky if you got as good at the big hotel down in the village, and they charge three times what I am making you pay."

" Have a cigar?"

Mr. Skinner gripped it with avidity.

" I'll smoke it before I go to bed," he farewelled.

" Good-night."

" Good-night."

Out of hearing of their landlord Muldoon remarked:

" Asther all, he ain't so bad."

" No," owned Mrs. Muldoon. " We moight get along quite well for a while till yez back is betther. Ye moight as well put on the plaster."

Muldoon saw that there was no getting out of putting on the plaster.

" It being bed-time now," he said to Roger, " ye will plaze make yesilf unfrequent, as ye cannot be av any assithance in the adjustment av the infernal machine."

" All right, pop," said Roger. " Give me a cigarette, I don't want to go to bed just yet."

" Shure yez grubbing for cigarettes will make me poor. But here, ye moight as well finish what I have—I never wur cut out for a smoker av cigarettes."

" What ails them?"

" There is nothing to them. Wan puff at them and out they go! Ginerally I bite wan in half asther the first pull and get me mouth filled with loose tobacco, which gets down me throat into me lungs and are loiable to give me the consumption."

" Well, don't smoke them, then. Good-night."

" Good-night."

" And say, pop?"

" Well?"

" Don't see any more bats."

" And don't you fall in any more brooks."

" I'll try not to."

Then Muldoon undressed.

It was a difficult task, owing to his back, which seemed to hurt him at every garment he pulled off.

But at last with his wife's assistance he got it on.

" How long will I kape it on, Bridget?"

She patted it firmly on.

" Ah, all noight," she returned.

" Won't it hurt?"

" Ah, ye big baby. It moight smart for a whoile, but it will soon be over."

Thus assured and the plaster adjusted he finally got to bed.

At first the pepper in the plaster remained dormant.

Not for long.

The warmth of Muldoon's body, for he lay on his back, soon caused the pepper to get in its fine work.

He began rolling from side to side.

" What ails ye? Can't ye lay still?" asked his wife.

" No."

" Why not?"

" It is the plaster."

" What ails it?"

" It must be covered wid pepper."

" Pepper?"

" Yis."

" Are ye crazy?"

" Why?"

"Who would put pepper in a plaster for yez back?
Ye must be woild."

"So I am—woild wid pain."

"Ain't ye ashamed av yesilf?"

"Why?"

"Crying away like a big baby."

"I ain't crying."

"Ye are doing worse."

"What's that?"

"Swearing undher yez breath."

"It's a wondher I don't howl."

"Just ye dare to."

"I will if ye don't take it off."

"The plaster?"

"Yis."

"Well, I won't, that's all."

"Then I'll yell."

He opened his mouth,

She knew from his tone that he meant what he said.

"So ye want it off?"

"Yis."

Disgusted at what she considered his inability to bear a little pain, she took hold of one end and pulled it off.

She did it gently.

Oh, yes!

In an ironical sense.

When the plaster came off, several square inches of his cuticle came off, too.

He jumped from the bed with a wild Irish war-whoop.

"Murdher!" shrieked he. "Woman, ye have massacred me!"

"Shut up!" she said.

"I will not!" bawled he. "Roger!"

Roger heard the cry.

He must have been extraordinarily wrapt in slumber if he had not.

He knocked at the door.

"Want me?" asked he.

"Yis."

"What for?"

"Come in and see."

"I will in a minute."

"Come now."

"Just wait a minute, will you?"

"Why?"

"The door is stuck."

"Kick it open."

Roger, however, did not follow the advice.

In a second or so he had the door opened.

"What is it now?" asked he.

"Yez mother," answered Muldoon.

"What about her?"

"She has nearly killed me."

"How?"

"By ripping off me plaster."

"Is that all?"

"Yes; ain't it enough? Roger?"

"What?"

"Do me a favor?"

"What?"

"Do ye know ould Skinner's room?"

"I can find it."

"Then do so. Go to it and get me some salve."

Roger dressed and found the room of Mr. Skinner.

He awakened that gentleman, after considerable trouble.

"Who's there?" queried Mr. Skinner.

"Me," said Roger.

"Who's you?"

"Roger."

"Roger Muldoon?"

"Yes."

"What do you want?"

"It's the old man again."

"Your dad?"

"Yes."

"What ails him now?"

"He's in trouble, as usual."

"Yes. What is it now?"

"Something was wrong with the plaster, and when he tore off his mustard plaster he tore most of his skin off."

"Jehosaphat, but he is an unfortunate cuss."

"That's so. He wants some salve to kill the smart."

"Lucky I got some horse salve last time I was in town that will take the smart out or make him easier, I guess. Here's the box."

"How's it used?"

"Just put a piece as big as an egg on a spare towel, and spread it on thick."

"Yes."

"Tell him not to be skeery of using it, for he kin get me a new box—this one is most gone."

"Yes."

"And he can buy me a new one when I go to town."

"Yes."

"And I'm quite sartain that it will do him good."

"Thanks."

"Don't mention it. I allus like to oblige."

Mr. Skinner shut the door, and Roger regained the apartment of his sire in safety.

"Are ye back?" groaned Muldoon.

"Yes."

"What luck?"

"I've got some salve that will fix you all right."

"Ye have?"

"Yes, sir."

"Thank Heaven! Bedad, me bye, when we get home I think I will give ye an interest in the cigar stand. It niver paid anyway."

CHAPTER VI.

THE salve was applied.

Whether it was imagination or not, but, at any rate Muldoon fancied that it relieved his pain, and very probably it did.

"How does the old thing work, pop?" asked Roger.

"Pretty well," he answered. "I feel aisier, I think."

"That's good! But where do I come in?"

"On what?"

"The salve."

"What do ye mane?"

" Didn't I go after it for you?"

" Yis."

" Ain't that worth something?"

" Well, I suppose so. What do ye want?"

" My money back that you took away."

" I'll give it back."

" Thanks. Good-night."

" Good-night."

Next morning Muldoon felt a great deal better.

True, he had passed a somewhat restless night, but what could be expected?

Then, too, Mr. Skinner kept his word as regarding the breakfast.

It was a meal that nobody could growl at.

After breakfast Roger showed up.

" Pop," he said, " Jim wants to see you."

" Who's Jim?"

" Shivery shake."

" Oh, you mean the hired man?"

" Kerect."

" What does he want to see me about?"

" He's got a present for you."

" Me?"

" Yes."

" What got him mashed on me?"

" Your shape, I guess."

" But what is the gift?"

" A crutch."

" To help me walk, I suppose?"

" Yes."

" Shure, it is kind av him. Show him up."

Roger went to the head of the stairs.

" Jim?" he called.

There was a shamble of steps on the stairs and Jim entered.

It was an off day for the chills, and he did not have the trembles.

" How are you, James?" queried Muldoon, patronizingly. " How are the chills?"

" Better, sir," Jim answered, as he made an awkward bow. " Here is something I made fer you."

As he spoke he extended the crutch, which was a rude wooden affair.

Muldoon took it.

" I am much obliged to ye," he said. " Will ye have a cigar?"

He was nothing loath.

On being handed the box he took three.

" They look like a good cigar," he said.

" They are."

" Bet they cost you a good price?"

" They did."

" How much?"

" Fifteen cents apiece."

" Shoo!"

" Fact."

" Gosh, but that's a stunnin' price to pay for a smoke."

They must be good."

" They are."

" Can I light one here?"

" Av coorse."

Jim lit it.

" That's a daisy," he commented.

" It is."

Still Jim lingered.

Muldoon could not imagine the cause of his stoppage.

" Anything else I can do for ye?" Muldoon asked him.

Jim fidgeted for a minute, and then he replied as if ashamed of himself:

" I sat up most all night makin' that crutch."

" Which wur very kind av ye," praised Muldoon.

" But the crutch is wurth sumthin', ain't it?" interrogated its donor.

Muldoon dropped. He wanted money.

Another strike.

" How much do ye think I ought to pay ye?" interrogated he.

Jim considered.

" Well," he said, " 'bout a dollar."

Muldoon knew there was no use kicking.

" Here," he said, " here is your dollar."

He tossed the bill to Jim.

" Anything else I can do for you?" he mentioned.

" No," curtly rejoined Muldoon.

The expression of Muldoon was so comic in his wrath that Mrs. Muldoon could not help laughing.

Muldoon forgot his usual gallantry.

He turned fiercely upon his spouse.

" What do ye mane, ye rouged ould poll-parrot," growled he.

" Fil ain't that a noice way to talk to a leddy," said she.

" I can't help it."

" Why not?"

" Did ye hear the gall av that son av a pirate?"

" What about?"

" Taxing me a dollar for this derrick?"

" Why, Terry, it ain't such a bad looking crutch."

" I'd loike to see mesilf carry it in New York."

" But ye ain't in New York. It may save ye many a fall."

" Give it me."

She complied.

Aster all, the crutch was light, and would do for an article to walk with, and Jim had possessed the foresight to tack a tip of rubber on its bottom.

Muldoon kept it in his room all that day and also for a couple of others.

Finally a bright, sunshiny day arrived.

The air was balmy and Mrs. Muldoon urged him to try and go down to breakfast.

After considerable persuasion he did so.

He found the task not so very difficult after all, and after the meal was over he went out on the stoop.

Mrs. Muldoon followed.

" Terry," said she, " ye must take a walk this morning."

" I must?"

" Yis."

" Well, it seems to me that ye are putting on lots a: authority."

" It is me duty. If I did not accompany ye, ye moight fall down and get hurt."

"That is so—come along."

Muldoon was delighted to find he could promenade with considerable *eclat*.

"Where will we go?" asked he.

"To the barn-yard," answered Roger.

"What for?.. To see the pump?"

"No."

"What thin?"

"The fowls?"

"Has he many?"

"I should say so."

He hobbled to the barn-yard.

Roger was right.

There were all sorts of fowls.

Chickens.

Geese.

Ducks.

Ditto turkeys.

They made a fine show.

"Faix it is a free exhibition av fancy fowls," he said.

"There is the boss of them all," Roger remarked.

"Where?" asked Muldoon.

Roger pointed to a big turkey-gobbler, a tremendous fellow.

"Ain't he a stunner?"

"Yis," said Muldoon, with a sigh of regret; "how I wish I could charm him for Thanksgiving. He wud bring forthy cints a pound wid all the feathers on."

Unluckily for Mrs. Muldoon, she had a red shawl on.

It is a curious fact of natural history that red acts upon a turkey-gobbler just like a bull.

It drives them to a ferocious attack on the person wearing it.

The old gobbler looked up.

He perceived the hue of Mrs. Muldoon's shawl.

That settled it.

He made a blind rush for her.

"Run for your life, mother!" cried Roger.

Mrs. Muldoon caught one sight of the approaching fowl.

Did she run?

Well, rather.

She was through the barn-yard gate in a trice.

Muldoon started to run (?) too.

A healthy runner he made, hampered by the crutch.

Gobblers have not a good eye for physiognomy.

He caught sight of the fleeing grocer.

Surely that must be the person who had riled him.

Hapless Muldoon.

His crutch got in his way.

Down he went.

Exactly in front of the infuriated gobbler.

That amiable fowl let no time pass in exhibiting his beligerency.

He went for the prostrate man bald-headed.

In a short period he would doubtless have torn Muldoon's garments to shreds had not Muldoon found his voice.

"Help!"

"Help!"

He called for assistance three times.

Luckily he was heard.

Jim was in the corn-crib.

He bounced out of it in a hurry.

One minute of surprise as he beheld the relative positions of Muldoon and the gobbler.

"I'll be dod-ghasted!" he exclaimed, "if that poor, unfortunate Yorker ain't got himself in another muss. Waal, I never! Gosh, but I don't wonder at him being cranky! That old gobbler is hierble to kill him if he's let alone."

He grabbed a stick which luckily was near, and started to Muldoon's rescue.

He was just in the nick of time.

The gobbler, having penetrated clothing, was about to sample flesh.

He raised the stick, a corpulent one, and gave the gobbler a whack.

His aim was good.

The bully of the barn-yard took a tumble.

One that laid him flat, and it was a wonder he was not killed.

But he was made of sterner stuff, and cunningly lay still until he thought his assailant was out of the way, and then strutted off, big as before, to give his feathered friends oleomargarine to the effect that he could have easily have downed the hired man had he not been taken by surprise.

Jim helped Muldoon to arise.

"Are you hurt much?" asked he.

"Hurt!" repeated Muldoon. "Oh, no! I never get hurt."

"But really?"

"Not much, I guess. More scared than hurt."

"Glad to hear it. That old cuss is a holy terror. Know what he done last summer?"

"What?"

"Nearly killed a boarder?"

"But didn't the boarder have the gobbler killed?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"Cos he wore a red polo jacket into the poultry yard. You know a gobbler can't a-bear red. Did you have anything red on?"

"No."

"Didn't throw stones at him?"

"No."

"Or chase him with anything?"

"No."

Jim looked puzzled.

"Were you alone?" he asked.

"No."

"Any one with you?"

"Yis."

"Who?"

"Me wife and the lad."

"Roger?"

"Yis."

"Did either of them have anything red on?"

"Yis."

"Who?"

"Mrs. Muldoon."

"What garment did she have on?"

"A red shawl."

"That settles it. He was after her, not you. I don't see why he tackled you."

"Bekase," Muldoon replied, "I stood betwane me woife and him."

Jim looked at Muldoon with a good deal of respect.

"You did?" he asked.

"Yis," solemnly replied the artful old card. "I had me crutch, did I not, and av coorse me first duty wur to protect me family."

"That's so," said Jim, as he picked up the crutch.

"Here, you needn't mind usin' this on the way home."

"Why not?"

"I'll fix it up for you better than ever, with tassels on it."

"Thanks."

Assisted by his companion, Muldoon, who was not hurt half as much as he made out, went back to the house.

"Oh, Terry, Terry, are ye kilt?" wailed Mrs. Muldoon.

"Not quoite," returned he, "but I wur nearly so."

"How?"

"Thrying to save ye."

"Me?"

"Yis."

"How?"

"Any person who wears a red shawl is liable to be killed whin a gobbler behounds it."

"Is that so?"

"Yis. Ye wore a shawl of red?"

"I did."

"The gobbler went for ye."

"He did?"

"Yis."

"What did ye do?"

"Thried to save ye."

"Did ye do it?"

"Yis."

"How?"

"I knocked the gobbler down wid me crutch; didn't I, Jim?"

As he spoke he winked at Jim.

Jim tumbled.

"Yes, Mrs. Muldoon," he said, "if it had not been for your husband, you would never have been alive."

"That is the fact," assured Jim.

He got paid for his prevarication.

A dollar was the price of his perfidy.

"He ain't such a bad old terrier after all," soliloquized he. "He's a crank, that's all, but he's a good one. Danged if old Skinner tries to skin him too much, I'll put a flea in his ear."

CHAPTER VII.

MULDOON'S turkey adventure, thanks to Jim's lying, made a sort of a hero out of him.

Mrs. Muldoon petted him until it was an old phrase.

He got too big for his boots.

Muldoon could not bear spoiling.

Gradually he became imbued with the idea that he had performed some wonderful feat of daring in being ignominiously licked by his feathered foe.

For a couple of days he went around as if he were some modern Achilles.

But in a very little while the gobbler episode was forgotten.

His temporary halo of fame faded from his head.

Once more he was in modern Paladin.

Mr. Skinner continuing to keep the bill of fare up, Muldoon did not make any more disturbance in regard to it.

Soon he could get around quite lively, and spend his time investigating the farm.

Mr. Skinner was very proud of one thing.

That was his hives of bees.

He had reason to be.

His swarms were as fine as any in Orange County (which, by the way, is saying a good deal), and the profits from them netted him a goodly profit each year, and he was proud of them.

"Seen my bees yet, Mr. Muldoon? Has Mrs. Muldoon?" he queried, one morning.

"No," answered the grocer; "have ye bees?"

"Have I? They can't be beat."

"That is good."

"Would you like to see them?"

"It wud afford me the greatest av plasyure."

"Well, I am sorry I can't go with you, but you can find them easy enough yourself. They are just hiving, and I warn you of one thing."

"What's that?"

"Don't bother them."

"Why not?"

"If disturbed they are liable to hive on you as well as anybody else. Does Mrs. Muldoon like honey?"

"Av coorse I do," promptly stated the lady for herself.

"And Roger?"

"Does he? At the grocery I can hardly keep a honey-comb in the store whin he is there."

"Then you will all like to see the bees at work. But again I say don't bother them."

"Indade and I won't," promised Muldoon.

He meant what he said.

Until he reached the bee-hives.

They appeared to be peaceful enough as regarding their occupants.

A few bees were flying peacefully around.

Muldoon saw a chance to elecutionize.

He struck an attitude.

"There is an example fur ye, Roger," said he.

"What is it?" asked he.

"Don't ye remembher the beautiful loines av Doctur Watts?"

"Who was he?"

"Shure ye ought to remember. Did ye niver go to Sunday-school?"

"Certainly."

"But I have me misgivings on the subject. He wrote those beautiful loines entitled:

"How does the little busy bee,

Improve ach shoining hour,

And gather honey all the day

From ivery fruit and flower."

Roger looked wearied.

"Say, pop," he said, "you ought to blush for yourself."

"Why?"

"Getting off such a chestnut."

"Indade, I'm proud av it!" "Bekase it is the only verse of poethry I iver knew, ixcept wan I penned to ye, Mrs. Muldoon, before I wur married. It wur penned to yez mother, and it read as follows:

The rose is red,
The violet blue;
Sugar is swate,
And so are you."

Mrs. Muldoon pretended to be offended.

In her mind.

What woman, old as the oldest crow, ever disliked a little flattery?

"Shure it was always the smooth tongue ye had," she said.

"Bekase I cannot help it whin ye are near," he gallantly answered. "Do ye raymimbher the avening I foirst met ye?"

"Where was it?"

"At a church strawberry festival, and the way in which ye got away wid the viands showed that ye wur no consumptive."

"Arrah, get out, ye crazy loon," retorted his better half.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE trio reached the bee-hives.

The bees at first paid no attention to them, and if they had passed on would have never disturbed them.

But it was not in our genius ("crank" perfectly describes him) to leave anything alone for a second which he wished to investigate.

Hobbling almost to within two feet of the bee-hive, he gave it a whack with his stick.

There was silence for a moment.

An ominous silence.

But only for a moment.

The following moment there was an exodus.

Of bees.

Each bee mad as he or she could be at being disturbed in the sanctity of their homes.

They spotted Muldoon instinctively as the one who had done it.

They went for him.

They swooped down on him like the Assyrians are rumored to have swooped down on the sheep in the fold, as reported by Byron, who was an English poet and had a club-foot, which little infirmity did not prevent him being a general masher.

He did not face them.

Not much.

He concluded it best to flee.

He did so.

Again the crutch.

It got in his way.

It tripped him up.

He fell on his face.

Into a pool of water.

Which was more water than mud.

"Get up, pop," howled Roger, fleeing for his life as he thought, "put mud on your face."

Mrs. Muldoon fled too.

She exhibited remarkable speed as a fair flyer pedestrian, and any one would have conjectured that she was endeavoring to beat Myer's best record.

Muldoon had sense enough to cover his hands and face with mud, which is as good an alleviation for insect stings as there is.

He found the fact out.

After lying still awhile, until he thought his insect tormentors had departed, he arose.

He found what Roger said was so.

Not a bee was in sight.

But they had not left him unscathed.

Nixey.

They had left a few little mementoes of their visit.

How many bites they had inflicted on his cuticle it would be difficult to say, as there was no census taken of them.

Five hundred might have come pretty close to the mark, allowing for a slight exaggeration.

He limped to the side of his wife and son.

Every step was a torture.

Mrs. Muldoon was almost frantic when he arrived.

"Oh, Terry, Terry, what will ye be doing next?" she ejaculated.

"Kill mesilf if me bad luck kapes on!" he desperately groaned. "Oh, me face, me face!"

"Does it hurt?"

"Does it hurt?" Muldoon wailed. "does it? Howly murther, woman, if ye ask me the questhion again I will kill ye. Hurt! ab, ha! av coorse it don't. I could dance wid joy, ha, ha, ha!"

She saw that her husband was really stung very badly.

When the house was reached she marched him up to their room.

"Sit down," ordered she, "and thry to be quoiet until I go to Mrs. Skinner and see if she ain't got something for to take the pain out av the stings."

She succeeded after awhile in finding the lady she was in search of.

When told Mrs. Muldoon's errand, Mrs. Skinner looked aghast.

"My goodness!" she exclaimed, "is that poor, unfortunite man of yours in trouble again?"

"Yes, he is always in trouble. What will do him good, and make him easier?"

"Got any salve left?"

"The kind he used for his back?"

"Yes."

"I think there is a little left."

"Waal, just tell him to use that. He could not use a better thing."

Mrs. Muldoon returned with the information, and Muldoon applied the salve, putting it on an old red silk handkerchief.

And when he got his head tied up he presented a most comical sight.

The salve, which was a home-made concoction made by Mrs. Skinner herself, was really a good article.

She was famed for it, and put it up in boxes and sold it.

It was even kept at Pleasantville at the village drug-store, where it was labeled:

"SKINNER'S SALVE,

Salvation For Man and Beast!

Cures Wounds, Sprains, External and Internal Injuries.

Prepared By Otis Skinner,

Pleasantville, N. J.

Price Fifty Cents.

Beware of Counterfeits."

At first it did not seem to give the sufferer much relief, but finally it did.

Not to say that the pain was entirely cured, but the fiery torments which he had suffered at first from his insect foes gradually became mitigated.

In a couple of days his face looked decidedly better, and what pleased him more, felt better.

Truly the salve was a good remedy if indeed it was made at home.

Still he did not venture out much in public. He felt his appearance abroad would be apt to excite humorous remarks, and he was very susceptible to ridicule.

Time, though, makes one forget his susceptibilities and it also healed Muldoon's face.

And his back, too, became well.

The crutch was delegated to one corner, where it stood in ornamental grandeur.

He became himself again and felt quite content, more especially as Mr. Skinner kept up the menu.

"Say, Mr. Muldoon?" asked Jim one day when he did not have the shakes.

"Well?" answered Muldoon.

"Want to have some fun to-night?"

"What doing?"

"Jacking for eels?"

"Yis, but will ye plaze tell me how ye do it?"

"What?"

"Jack for eels."

"Oh, it's awful easy."

"That is what I am tould av everything I thry, but if I thry to thry it I foind out that the asiness is very difficult to discern."

"Did you notice a pond about a mile away from here?"

"No; I've not been here long enough to get acquainted with the topography and mineralogy, loikewise the geography of the countrhy."

These words deeply impressed Jim.

He did not understand one syllable of them, and therefore he put the speaker down as a man of stupendous education.

"The pond," he informed, "is only about a mile away, and we'll jack it about ten o'clock to-night."

"Ain't that late?"

"No; just the right time. It's rather cloudy, and my boat is all fixed in the pond."

"Do you go in a boat?"

"Yes. You'll come?"

Muldoon, with his usual good-nature, or some people might call it idiocy, promised to go.

Mrs. Muldoon demurred when she heard of the proposed expedition.

First she wanted to go along, and complained when he would not take her.

It was only on the assurance that there was no room for her in the boat that she subsided.

Roger soon heard of the proposed trip.

He did not propose to get left.

He begged his father to let him go also.

Muldoon at first negated the proposition, but finally agreed to it.

Especially as Jim put in a kindly word for him.

But a new difficulty arose.

If Mrs. Muldoon found out that Roger was going, when she had been told that there was no vacancy for her, there would be a commotion in the family.

So Roger made an excuse to her that he was going to pay a visit that night to a lame boy who lived but a few houses away.

"He wants me to come and play chess with him," alleged he.

"Is he a nice boy?" asked she.

"Yes'm. His mother is a widow."

"Poor soul! I can sympathize with her. I war a widow myself before I married yez father. Sometimes I think I moight have done betther."

"Now, mother, you're only talking."

"I ain't quoite so certhain of that. There wur Pat McQueen, the big distiller, who, when he heard I had married yez father, threatened suicide and nearly went crazy."

"Did he hari-kari himself?"

"No, but he done almost as bad."

"How?"

"He married Eleanor McCommiskey, who led him such an awful loife that the poor man in despair ran away with a woman ould enough to be his grandmother."

"Oh, mother, you're hard on pop! Good-night. I'm off."

"Good-noight."

She would have said good-night with a vengeance had she known where he was really going.

He was a little late reaching the pond where he was to meet his two companions.

He found them impatiently waiting.

"What kept ye so long?" asked his father.

"Had to tell mother a fable," he answered.

"What was it?"

"I am supposed to be sitting up with a sick kid."

"That is a noice sort av a kid to give to yez mother! Ye ought to blush wid shame."

"And if you ever get off such a wretched joke as that again you ought to be immolated."

Muldoon gazed admiringly at his son.

"Hear him, Jim?" asked he.

"Yes," said Jim. "He is a great lad, and if he keeps on may grow up equal to his father."

The boat lay alongside of an amateur wharf composed of stones.

Roger scrambled in without assistance.

The boat was a flat-bottomed boat, and at the stern end was a big lantern—a regular calcium light.

"Now I guess we are all ready," said Jim. "Roger, you row."

"All right," answered Roger.

"What do I do?" queried Muldoon, anxiously.

"Sit still in the stern," came the reply.

Muldoon got up in the stern obediently.

Roger took the oars.

He was a good rower, and rowed so noiselessly that the splash of his oars could hardly be heard.

He did this with a purpose, for if he had made too much noise his prey would have become affrighted and fled.

As it was, he made just enough noise to make the eels crawl out of the mud and wriggle around.

The lantern's light showed them the muddy bottom, also the eels.

They were big, fat, luscious-looking fellows, and Jack grabbed his spear in a hurry.

An eel spear is a weapon about ten feet long, consisting of a hickory or ash pole, and provided at the end with three sharp prongs. Once those prongs are imbedded in an eel his name is "Dennis," emphatically.

Jim spied a nice fat fellow, who weighed a couple of pounds at least.

"Look out!" he cried.

Muldoon was looking out already.

Looking idly at the water.

But when he heard the shout he started up.

How he ever did it he could not tell.

But he did do it.

What?

Fell out of the boat.

Jim's quick eye beheld the calamity.

He righted the boat, or else both himself and Roger would have been landed in the pond too.

There was no danger of Muldoon being drowned, as eels are only "jacked" for at low tide.

But he did not know that.

He thought the pond a veritable Atlantic Ocean when the depth of the water was not more than three feet in its deepest parts.

Being a good swimmer he began striking out.

Knowing that he was in no danger of drowning, his two companions could not refrain from uttering peals of laughter.

Their merriment almost broke his heart.

"The cold-blooded villains!" he howled, "to jest at me. Roger!"

"Did you call, dad?" asked Roger.

"Oh, you young imp! Ye know I did well. Throw me a life-preserved."

"A what?"

"A life-preserved."

"What are you giving us? Do you suppose we carry life-preservers? We are only an humble, unostentatious boat. Where have we the room to carry preservers of life?"

"Oh, let up a little on the old man," said Jim, who had a kind heart. "Throw him an oar."

Roger did so.

He threw an oar to his father's rescue.

Muldoon grabbed it as if it was his last hope of salvation.

"Put it under your arms and kick out," Roger ordered. His father obeyed.

"Now kick out and swim for the shore."

Really Muldoon had no necessity to employ the oar at all, for he was a fair swimmer.

But he was rattled.

All broken up.

He placed the oar beneath his arm-pits and struck out for land.

His feet struck the muddy bottom of the pond, and the sharp stones which lurked at the bottom of the pond bruised his person.

"I guess we'll let up on the old gentlemen," said Jim.

"Hey, pop," bawled Roger, "come off! Don't make a circus of yourself. Get up and walk."

"Walk!" spluttered Muldoon, "how can I walk?"

"Easy enough. Know how deep the pond is?"

"No."

"Three feet."

"What?"

"It's so. Ain't it, Jim?"

"Hardly that."

Muldoon felt completely disgusted.

Depth of the water three feet.

His height nearly five feet ten.

He scrambled up.

He grabbed the oar, and by means of its assistance scrambled ashore.

Was not he a pretty sight?

Rather.

He was soaked from head to foot.

"Gosh," said Jim, when they all reached the land, "it will never do for you to walk home that way."

"Why not?"

"You will catch your death of cold with those wet clothes."

"But where will I get a new change."

"I'll get them for you."

"Where?"

"Up the road a little ways. Walk as fast as you can." They did so.

After a brisk walk of a few minutes they reached a shanty, for that was all it could be called.

It was dark.

Jim did not mind the darkness.

Rap!

Rap!

Rap!

His summons were responded to after a while.

The door cautiously opened.

An old fellow about seventy put out his head.

"Who's there?" asked he.

"Me," said Jim.

"That you, Jim?"

"Yes. Open the door."

"Are you alone?"

"No."

"Who's with you?"

"Two of the boarders up at Skinners."

"What are they doing out at this time of the night?"

"Oh, old man, let us in and don't keep us outside till morning."

Finally the door was opened.

Opened by an old fellow who was arrayed in a long, flannel night-shirt, and wore a night-cap.

He was an old soldier, a veteran of the war, and Jim introduced the Muldoons very briefly.

"Two of a kind!" he said, "father and son. Bricks!" That was enough.

The old man to whom Jim did many favors was satisfied at this recommendation.

He let them in and ushered him into the only room in the house, which was bedroom, kitchen and parlor combined.

The old party, whose name was Pettingill, grew very affable.

He gave Muldoon and Jim a drink of hard cider, which refreshed them a little, and then the circumstances of the misfortune which had happened to his eldest guest being narrated, he offered to help them in any way in his power.

The offer was gladly accepted.

"It ain't much we want," said Jim. "You've got your old army overcoat, ain't you?"

The veteran's eyes shone, dim as they were, with what almost seemed new life.

"I wouldn't part with it for worlds," he answered. "There is a bullet-hole through it which shows where I nearly got laid out at Seven Oaks. But why do you ask?"

"You kin see for yourself that Mr. Muldoon is dripping wet, and requires a change of clothes."

"Anything I've got he can have."

CHAPTER IX.

HE was as good as his word.

Muldoon soon got rid of his saturated garments, and was furnished with others by the old veteran campaigner.

They consisted of a fatigue cap, shirt, vest and pants, and an old army overcoat.

This new apparel made a decided change in his appearance.

If he only had a musket to carry he would have looked like one of the original Mulligan Guards.

The old soldier got more than thanks for the loan of his raiment.

A "V" was slipped into his hand, and he thanked the donor heartily. It probably kept the old soldier in his little creature comforts for three months later.

The procession was then resumed home.

Muldoon was in no hurry to get there.

He dreaded the reception he would meet on his arrival home.

Mrs. Muldoon would assuredly make it sultry for him, more especially as she had been told that there wasn't room for her, and then to find out that Roger had been taken along instead of her, and the pretense that there was not room in the boat would be shown to be a bald-headed lie.

All journeys come to an end, and the Skinner pagoda was finally reached.

All was dark.

It seemed as if all were in bed, which they were.

Jim pushed open the door, which had purposely been left open for them.

He escorted them up to their room.

"Good-night," he bade.

"Good-night," ruefully answered Muldoon, who had his anticipations of the "good-night" he would pass when his wife learned of his new misadventure.

Roger retired to his own room, and Muldoon went to his.

Through the door he could hear the sweet snoring of Mrs. M.

"Faix," groaned he, "I could tell that carol anywheres."

He tried the door.

It was locked.

"The ould apparition!" he muttered; "why didn't she leave it open? Now I suppose I will have to wake up the whole house by knocking. I wondher, however, if I can't burst the door open wid a gentle pressure av me knee?"

He tried.

To his delight, he was successful, the lock on the door being only a cheap farce.

He made very little noise.

But the noise he did make was enough to arouse Mrs. Muldoon.

She arose up in bed.

"Is that ye, Terry?" sleepily she queried.

"Yes," answered Muldoon.

"What luck did ye have wid—"

She never concluded the sentence.

Rubbing her eyes with her knuckles, she got what the children call the sand out of them.

The figure that she beheld could surely not be her husband.

It must be some tramp bent on robbery.

She was just about to shriek, when Muldoon clapped his hand over her mouth.

"Hould yez whist!" requested he. "What do ye take me for?"

"A murdherer," faintly gurgled Mrs. Muldoon.

"Do I luk loike a murdherer?"

"Ye do, and ye cannot slay me wid impunity. Oh, if me husband were only here. But I have his pistol roight undher me pillow—"

"For Heaven's sake, Bridget!" yelled he, in an agony of apprehension but that she would pull it out from beneath his pillow and use it—he knew she was game enough to do so—"it is I, your husband. See!"

Quick as he could—you can wager he wasted no time in his movements—he threw off his disguise.

"Are ye satisfied now that it is mesilf and no wan ilse?" queried he.

Mrs. Muldoon, to make a candid confession, felt a little foolish.

"It is ye?" she said. "But what do ye mane by masquerading around in that style?"

"Bekase I wur compelled to."

"Where's yez own clothes?"

"Left wid a friend av moine."

"What do ye mane?"

"Just what I say."

"That's very definite."

"It is the thruth all av the same. We wint eeling, and I met wid an accident."

"What wur it?"

"I fell into the wather av the pond, whin said wather wur sixty feet deep, and came widin an ace av being dhronned. I belave I moight have been had it not been for the heroism av Jim and Roger."

Roger!

At the mention of Roger's name she pricked up herears.

"Did he go along?"

"Yis," confessed Muldoon.

"Oh, won't I give it to him! Coming to me wid a loi about sitting up wid a lame boy. And so ye fell in?"

"I did."

"Well, it serves ye just roight, and I have no pity for ye. I mane, whin we get back to New York, to have yez head examined."

"What for?"

"Ye have niver been roight since the noight ye wur moonstruck on a picnic barge the toime we wint on the moonlight excursion and ye fell aslape, and ye got full on what ye said wur hard cider, but I have me suspicions that it wur something sthronger."

"It wur not, Mrs. Muldoon, and ye wrong me whin ye say otherwoise. At that toime did I not belong to the Sons av Temperance?"

"Yis, and a foine Son av Temperance ye wur. The very noight asther ye joined ye wint to a wake and ye wur wheeled home in a hand-cart. Wur ye not bounced from yez lodge?"

"It wur envy did it. They wur all jealous av me, especially the masther, who wur afraid that bekase I wur so popular he would be bounced himself and me elected, so he hoired somebody to put gin in me lemonade."

"That will do. The oulder ye grow the bigger loier ye become. If ye mane to sleep to-noight come to bed. Oh, won't you have a dose of rheumatism to-morrow?"

For once she was wrong.

His ducking did not do him any harm, and next mornig he was all right.

Mr. Skinner, who had ceased to be surprised at anything that happened his eccentric boarder, only smiled faintly when he heard of his last mishap.

"You must bear a charmed life," he said.

He spoke the words out in the barn where he was cleaning an old army musket.

Just as soon as Muldoon saw the weapon he became possessed with a wild desire to borrow it and go out shooting.

"Mr. Skinner," said he.

"Well?"

"Will ye lind it to me?"

"What?"

"That cannon."

"Do you really want it?"

"Yis."

"Can you manage a gun?"

"Can I? Did ye iver hear av the McCloskey musketeers?"

"No. Who were they?"

"The finest target company that iver turned out av New York. I wur the captain and rode in a barouche."

"Yes?"

"I won two golden water pitchers and a basket av flowers."

"Gosh!"

"I hit the bull's-eye fifteen toimes ont av a possible fourteen."

"Gosh!"

"It's so, and whin ye visit me in New York this winther ye can feast yez eyes on thim yesilf."

Muldoon received the musket.

"Much game around?" he asked.

"Not much. You might knock over a chipmunk or so, but I don't think you will kill any buffaloes."

"Where do I gun?"

"Oh, you might just as waal go down in the orchard as anywhere else."

"In the orchard?"

"Yes."

"But what game can I foind there ixcept apples."

"You might find a robin. If you should, and manage to kill him, bring him home and we will have him roasted."

"All roight. I'll give ye a wing. But I must trespass farther on yez courtesy to borrow some powdher and shot and caps. I will pay ye for them."

"All right."

Muldoon received his ammunition.

Mr. Skinner loaded his gun for him and Muldoon shoudered it.

He proceeded to the orchard.

Game seemed to be scarce.

A lot of giant ants industriously climbing up and down the trees were about the only exhibits in the shape of game that he beheld.

But the game might come.

All things come to him who waits, lies the old proverb, and Muldoon resolved to wait. He sat down on a stump.

A cigar, to a smoker, is a splendid solace for whiling away the time, and Muldoon was an inveterate smoker.

Therefore he was well fixed with weeds at all times, and he lit one.

By degrees he began to realize that his legs were decidedly uncomfortable.

Some sort of insects he could feel were gradually crawling up them.

At first he thought it was merely some temporary skin itch.

But he found out his mistake.

Several vigorous bites showed him they were in earnest after his gore.

Almost frantic with pain, he slapped his legs.

His efforts were successful.

Soon the ants ceased their crawling.

But the stings did not cease, and Muldoon made the best of his way home.

It was a tough journey, but he reached the barn somehow.

Jim was there, fixing up the harness of the celebrated mule.

He dropped a wooden collar which he held just as soon as he perceived Muldoon.

Little blame.

Muldoon looked like a maniac.

"Great Gosh, Mr. Muldoon!" he said, as he relieved him of the musket. "What have you been up to now?"

"Don't speak. Throw me on the hapes av hay."

"What for?"

"Don't ask questhions."

Jim was accustomed to obedience to his superiors. He flung Muldoon down on the heap of straw indicated.

"Now," said he, "take off me clothes."

This request was a staggerer.

What could Mr. Muldoon desire to be disrobed for?

"But—but—" he began.

Muldoon checked him.

"Shut up!" he commanded, "and I will tell ye. Do as I say."

Jim did.

When disrobed Muldoon was a sight.

He was ant-bites all over his person, for two or three enterprising ants had journeyed up to his face, and added a few beauty marks to those which had already been inflicted by the bees.

The dead ants were removed, and they were stunners, too.

At last they were all removed, and their victim breathed freer.

Then he robed himself again.

Mrs. Muldoon was waiting for him on his return.

At once she saw he had killed no fabulous amount of game.

"Any luck?" asked she.

"Luck!" he bitterly answered. "Oh, yes."

"How's that?" she asked.

"I met no game, but I met worse."

"Just what I moight have expected. What did ye encounter?"

"Ants!"

Mrs. Muldoon looked incredulous.

"Ants?" she questioned.

"Yis."

"For Heaven's sake, Terry, how did ye fall in with ants?"

Muldoon related the story.

And once more Mr. Skinner's salve was applied with efficacious effect.

Although the bites of the ants did not heal up at once, their pain was soon mitigated.

Mr. Skinner made no remark over his boarder's calamity, for he was gradually growing accustomed to anything which occurred to him.

"It's all right," he philosophically said, "as long as he pays his board."

Which is the philosophical view of the case taken by the world in general.

CHAPTER X.

A COUPLE of days of rain followed.

This made Muldoon more cheerful.

He spent his time mostly playing penny-ante with Roger, and once in the while Mr. Skinner found time to take a social hand.

They regretted when he did.

Because it is the propensity of every person to desire to win, but Muldoon never did.

Neither did Roger.

Mr. Skinner managed to yank in all the "pots" all of the while.

This grew tiresome, and after father and son had lost about twenty dollars they were tired of it.

Gladly they welcomed the advent of a sunshiny day.

More especially as Mr. Skinner came in with the announcement at the breakfast-table that the circus was coming to town.

Muldoon nearly choked himself on a cargo of potatoes which he was endeavoring to bolt.

"A circus?" he said.

"A circus?" ejaculated Mrs. Muldoon.

"A circus?" Roger cried. "Oh, let us swallow the circus."

"It's coming to-morrow night," stated Mr. Skinner, "and we'll all go, though, of course, you know I'll have to tax you fifty cents a head for carrying you over to the circus-grounds."

"All roight," said Muldoon, who had got used to Mr. Skinner's idiosyncrasies, "we'll go wid ye."

So it came about that on the night of the arrival of the circus they all went to it, eager and expectant.

No accident happened to the vehicle; and in due course of time they arrived at the circus tents, the mule's peculiarities being seemingly subdued for a while.

Mr. Skinner carefully dismounted his boarders at a tree in the woods, in the clearing of which the circus was.

They paid their admission into the show, Mr. Skinner's admission being paid by Muldoon, the former alleging he was short of change and would make it square on the bill (which, by the way, he never did).

"Reserved seats, seventy-five cents!" yelled an usher.

There was nothing mean about Muldoon.

So he bought reserved seats.

More especially as he knew that it would gnaw at the vitals of Mr. Skinner to be taxed three-quarters of a dollar for the rude benches called "Reserved Seats," which differ from the other seats only that they are possibly harder to sit upon, and more difficult of visions of the sights of the ring than the others—the cheap ones.

At last the party were finally settled.

Way up on the reserved seats by a gentlemanly usher, who wore a big blue badge with a gorgeous rosette, and also peddled lemonade and gum-drops after he had seated his audience. The reserved seats were simply boards arranged in tiers, and so arranged that the knees of the spectators on one tier bunched into the backs of the spectators on the tier below.

Which made it very pleasant for the spectators on the tier below, and occasioned several lively fights, which were promptly quelled by the muscular ushers.

At last the show began.

To give it credit, it was a fair one, and the applause which greeted it was almost merited.

Suddenly Muldoon leaned forward.

The ring-master had just made an announcement.

"Ladies and gentlemen!" he shouted, "twenty-five

dollars to any gentleman who can ride the trick mule Adonis. Come here, Adonis!"

Out trotted a little white mule.

Muldoon arose.

Mrs. Muldoon noticed his action with wonder.

"Where are ye going?" she asked.

"To ride that mule."

"Ye are not!"

"But I will."

And he did.

No wonder he was so brave.

In the ring-master he recognized an old friend of his.

To say that the ring-master was surprised when Muldoon made his advent to ride "Adonis" would be to put it light.

"Jimminy Crickety, you here, Terry?" he asked.

"Yis. We're boarding here for the summer."

"Ah! But what in thunder are you doing here in the ring?"

"I want to ride the mule."

"Get out! You'll never get your quarter of a century if you do."

"That's all roight, Steve; I don't want it. I know ye can make that mule carry me as peaceably as if it wur a horse."

"Ah! you're up to all the tricks of the trade," answered the other, who well knew that it was he alone who directed the mule's actions.

He could make a perfect terror out of him, or make him as mild as a lamb.

Amidst tremendous applause Muldoon mounted the mule.

"He will be killed!" moaned Mrs. Muldoon.

"Serve him right," muttered Roger, who did not like the idea of his father making a public exhibition, as he privately termed it, of himself.

The band struck up "Sweet Violets," and Muldoon and the mule started off.

To every one's surprise, there was no throwal of the rider.

Muldoon rode around as if he was astride of some peaceful palfrey.

He received a perfect cyclone of applause, in which the owner of the show joined, he having been told that no money was to be paid out.

He even made a speech, for he was in the ring, and complimented Muldoon highly.

After which he was escorted to his seat by a procession of supes, while the band played "Hail to the Chief."

Mrs. Muldoon was all smiles.

More especially as she thought he had really secured the boodle offered.

"Ye did well," she said; "no wan could do better. Ye lukked as if ye wur glued to the mule."

"Troth, that shows how much ye know about my roiding abilitiies. Whin I lived in Limerick I used to ride mules by the shoals. I wanst on a toime rode a mule for ould Major McKeever, who I think had five av the homeliest daughters in the county, and wan av them, the eldest, named Marguerite, wur dead mashed on me, and I could have had her for the asking, bekase she wur not swate

lukking at all, and had what she called a beauty mark undher her chin, but which was rarely an incipient wart. She—"

"Terry," begged his wife, "will ye plaze shut up? If ye get wound up ye will run all noight for six hours, and ye will talk from now till dawn av day."

He subsided and the performance at last came to an end.

Mr. Skinner did not say much.

He was buried in sorrow.

"Say," he suddenly asked Muldoon, "did that mule ride easy?"

"Yes," answered Muldoon.

"But why did those who followed you in attempts to ride it get thrown?"

A sudden inspiration came to Muldoon.

"That is a saycret," he answered, "known only to meself. Is yez mule ever vicious?"

"Once in the while he takes these spells."

This was just the sort of a reply Muldoon wanted.

Would not he get square on the mercenary Mr. Skinner? Verily, yea.

"But," he went on, "ye have charged me for all extrahs I have had outside av me board. And if I take the throuble to quell your mule I expect to be paid for it."

"That ain't no more than fair," owned up Mr. Skinner. But he said it very sourly.

It was like losing a tooth.

He was a man to whom money was his life and very existence and soul. It was, to exaggerate a little, almost a substitute for his soul.

He knew with all his avariciousness that the mule was worth a good deal more than the price he had quoted it at originally.

"How much do you want?" asked he.

"Only a dollar."

"Waal, that is reasonable enough. I guess I will let you try him to-morrow."

"All roight," answered Muldoon, who, now that he had made the offer, was deeply regretful of it, for well he knew that he could tame the mule about as much as he could subdue a jaguar.

Yet with his customary modesty he resolved to make a try at it.

There was one thing that he never lacked.

That was courage.

Offer him sufficient pecuniary inducements and he would have made a try at the redoubtable John L. Sullivan.

The following morning was appointed for the subjugation of the mule.

Breakfast was rushed in order that all hands should have a fair show to see Muldoon conquer Beauty.

The hero of the event did not clamor for much food.

A night's reflection had convinced him that he had been too premature for his own welfare.

What did he know of conquering a mule?

Actually nothing.

It was not long after breakfast had been safely incarcerated in the gastronomic organs of its various partakers of it before the family, servants and all, adjourned to the road.

There was where the show was to take place, and Muldoon noticed that he had an audience.

The news of his successful riding of the mule the night previous—the celebrated trick mule, mind you—had spread all around the vicinity, and all of the rustics who could had come to see him ride the brute whose temper was well known.

But he braced up.

He mounted the animal by the aid of a soap-box which Jim accommodatingly held.

The animal was probably too surprised at his audacity to make an immediate remonstrance.

He trotted docilely along for about one hundred yards.

Then he realized that there was an incubus upon his back.

He was not the sort of mule to stand incubuses of any kind, human or otherwise.

He raised his heels.

He lowered his neck.

So did Muldoon lower his neck.

He saw that it was only a question of time before he would be thrown.

And he held out well.

He must have ridden the mule for fully ten rods before the casualty which could be expected occurred.

"Arrah, it is mesilf I belave could roide a giraffe wid practice. It only requires a cool head and a steady hand."

Alas for the boaster.

He must have overrated his abilities.

Hardly had he sounded his praises before off he went.

A sudden kick of Beauty's legs and he described a parabola through the air.

With his usual good fortune he landed in a pool of dirty water.

Also with his usual good fortune he was not hurt.

He landed on his feet blithe as a bird. Or pretended to, which amounts to just the same thing, three times out of five.

"Didn't I tell ye I could roide the baste?" asked he.

"But you didn't far," objected Mr. Skinner.

"But I rode her, didn't I?"

"Yes, but you got chucked off in the end."

Muldoon assumed an injured air.

He could do it.

When it suited his convenience.

"Mr. Skinner," said he, "allow me to interrogate an interrogation."

"Certainly," replied Mr. Skinner.

"There wur no stipulathion, wur there, as to how far I wur to roide the mule?"

"No."

"Well, then, ye can't complain about losing. Ye wud make a bad fiasco as a gambler, kicking when ye lose. Ye have no sporting blood in yez veins."

"I know it," replied the loser. "I never went to a fair yet without I got cheated. Last time I went a fellow bet me I could not pick out the queen of spades. He called the game three card monkey, or something like that."

"Three card monte, ye mane."

"Yes, I guess so, and he flung around three cards, and finally slung them on a little table he carried along with him.

He bet me I could not pick out the queen of spades. I thought I had a sure thing, for when he flung them down he sorter turned up the corner of one of the cards, and I saw, or at least I thought I saw, that it was the queen of spades."

Here the narrator paused to sorrowfully expectorate a deluge of tobacco over a passing chicken.

The reminiscence was evidently a painful one.

"It wasn't the queen of spades," he said, "but a card with the picture of a monkey sticking his fingers up to his nose at me, and I lost the five dollars I had bet on him."

"Well," philosophically consoled Muldoon, "didn't ye ever hear av the old proverb?"

"What's that?"

"It is wan av the thurst wans that ever was writthen, and I belave King Solomon wur its author."

"What was it?"

"That there is a new sucker born ivery day."

"There's a good deal of truth in it," confessed Mr. Skinner; "and by the way?"

"Well?"

"Speakin' about fairs, there is one to come off day after to-morrow."

"What?"

"Yes."

"Where?"

"Over to Greenville. We'll all go."

"Av what do the attractions av a country fair consist?"

"There's shows of hosses and cattle and pigs."

"I wud loike to view them, for I am consummately interested in dumb animals. When I make a forthunc out av me grocery I mane to go to Texas."

"Yes."

"I will hoire a ranch."

"Yes."

"And become a cattle king."

"I'd like to be one myself. We'll all go to the fair, and say, I'll treat."

"Treat?"

"Yes."

"How?"

"I'll carry you all free."

This burst of generosity on the part of his landlord nearly took Muldoon's breath away.

Somewhat dazed, he presented Mr. Skinner with two cigars.

So it was arranged that they should all go to the fair.

Mrs. Muldoon was intensely pleased at the contemplated excursion.

Especially when she heard of Mr. Skinner's unheard-of generosity.

"He must have been dhrinking," very charitably she said.

Roger was likewise all agog with excitement.

"It is about time we go somewhere," he said. "It is altogether too exciting for my blood."

"Well, we are going to it anyway," assured his father, "and I hope we'll enjoy ourselves. I know that I mane to thry."

Unfortunate utterance.

Little did he know how he would enjoy himself or he would have kept away from the fair.

CHAPTER XI.

THE morning of the fair dawned bright and propitious.

Every one started for the scene of festivities in a blithe and merry mood.

All except the unfortunate hired girl, who had one of her fits just before the pageant started off and had to be left at home.

The fair-grounds were soon reached, for the mule took it into his head to travel fast.

Mr. Skinner secured his equipage, and then they entered the buildings, if those temporary structures could so be called.

All was excitement.

A brass band, which played by force, discussed such musical novelties as "Captain Jinks" and the gems of "Pinafore."

Muldoon felt that as Mr. Skinner had carried them over free he could not be outdone in liberality, so he paid the way of the whole crowd in, a proceeding which his landlord had shrewdly calculated upon.

"What will we take in first?" he asked.

"Let's come view the pigs and other animals," suggested Mr. Skinner.

"I'd rather look at the fancy quilts and things like that," demurred Mrs. Muldoon.

"All roight," said Muldoon; "you and Mrs. Skinner go and criticize all av the brickety-broke and we men will go off by ourselves."

The fair was almost a pandemonium.

Each owner of a booth was capping for himself and his wares.

Surely there were all sorts of things to buy, the vendors of which, mounted on barrels and boxes, vaunted their merits loudly.

Most unheard-of and perfectly appalling bargains were offered.

Real gold watches at five dollars, with a chain on them as large as an ox-chain, warranted solid gold.

And as for silverware, solid (?) knives and forks went fairly begging.

Each hawker tried to outshout all of his fellows.

These are some of the specimens of the wares they vend:

"Alaska diamonds, studs and collar-buttons, as big as your fist, ladies and gents, almost given away. Here is a magnificent diamond cross, all white stones, only three dollars! Think of it—three dollars! Who is the lucky man who will buy it and excite the envy and admiration of all his fellows? But when the lucky purchaser goes to the city let him be very careful to button up his coat, or some crook will assuredly embezzle it."

"Don't mind him!" would howl his next neighbor, in good-natured rivalry, for these hawkers banter each other, which keeps the crowd in a good humor. "That diamond cross is composed of glass, and is not worth fifty cents. Look at these! Hammered silver bracelets, only fifteen cents a pair! Only four dozen pairs left!"

"They're tin," said a third man. "Ladies and gentle-

men, please don't waste your money on snide jewelry. Buy something which all—especially the ladies, bless their sweet faces—all admire. Perfumery—that is the article to buy. Gentlemen, you who have wives and sweethearts here, do not neglect this golden opportunity. Only a quarter a bottle, think of it! How it can be sold at such a ridiculously low price I cannot see. My private opinion is that it must have been stolen, but private opinions have nothing to do with business. Thanks, young man"—who had a blushing damsel on his arm—"when you are married send me an invite."

The last was to an awkward young man who had a blushing damsel on his arm.

He bought a couple of bottles of perfumery, and slunk away.

Muldoon did not invest in any of these wonderful bargains.

He was content to let the others enjoy that privilege.

But at last he reached something which did interest him.

It was a rifle range, and the shooter for the place spotted the three as possible victims.

In his eagerness he clutched Muldoon by the arm.

"Walk in, gentlemen," cried he, "and have a crack at the pipes! For every pipe you break you get a cigar, no cabbage cigar, either, but made from real genuine Havana tobacco, warranted to give the utmost satisfaction to any connoisseur of the weed. Three shots for ten cents."

Mr. Skinner nudged Muldoon.

"Say," said he, "here is a chance for you to show off."

"How?"

"Didn't you tell me what a great shot you was?"

"Yis."

"Then why don't you go in and take a hack at the pipes?"

Muldoon yielded as usual.

What else could he do?

It would never do to own that he was really no shot at all.

They entered the shooting-gallery.

The pipes were arranged at intervals of about four inches along the wire, standing upright, of course.

It looked very easy to hit them, and Muldoon thought he could pop three pipes and win a trio of cigars without the least difficulty.

The gun was loaded for him, and with an easy attitude he blazed away at the pipes.

When the smoke had cleared away the pipes were still there.

Not one of them was harmed.

Muldoon looked surprised.

"None down?" asked he.

"No," assured Mr. Skinner.

"That's queer."

"Very."

He fired again.

No better luck.

The pipes remained serene.

The third and last shot was equally unsuccessful.

Roger smiled.

Mr. Skinner laughed audibly.

"I guess," said he, "you are a little nervous."

"I think I am," said Muldoon. "Give me three shots more."

He had them.

His marksmauship, if possible, was worse than before. But he would not give up.

Not he.

He made up his mind to break a pipe if it cost him all the money he had about him.

Probably he would have kept on shooting at the pipes for an indefinite period, had it not been that Roger got ashamed of seeing his father make a fool of himself.

Especially as a crowd gathered around and began to make fun of Muldoon's marksmanship.

"Try it again, old top."

"Break some more up."

"Shatter three at once."

"Don't leave a whole one on the string."

"Bust them to splinters."

"Oh, no, don't be a hog. Leave some for somebody else to spill."

"Don't cut the string."

"Say, pop," said Roger, "will you ever drop on yourself?"

"Not till I bbreak a poipe."

"That you will never do."

"But I can kape on thrying. Don't bother me."

Roger saw there was no use of arguing with him in his present mood.

He could do nothing.

There was only one that could.

That was his mother.

He started in quest of her.

Luckily he soon found her.

"Mother," anxiously he said, "please come and get hold of dad."

Mrs. Muldoon looked discouraged.

"Is he in throuble?" asked she.

"Yes."

"What is it now?"

"He is down to the rifle range trying to break pipes."

"I don't see any harm in that."

"No, not if he could break them."

"But can't he?"

"No."

"I'd like to know why not? He always claims to be a good shot."

"Taffy."

"What do ye mane?"

"He could not hit a flock of barns, much less a pipe, and they are all guying him."

"Who?"

"The crowd."

"Is it any av their business, I wud loike to know, if he can't hit the poipes?"

"No."

"Thin why do they make it theirs?"

"Oh, you know how crowds are, and they think it very comical to see pop jump up and swear 'because he can't smash a pipe. They're calling him 'Old Fireworks.'"

"The old lunatic!" snapped Mrs. Muldoon, "why can't he behave himself?"

"Well, you know his little foibles of temper?"

"Foibles av tempfer?" echoed she. "Just ye take me to the shooting-gallery, and I will show him some av me foibles av tempfer."

It was a request which suited Roger perfectly.

He enjoyed the little domestic tiffs of his father and mot her.

He led her to the rifle range.

Muldoon was still there.

He was blazing away at the pipes as if that was his only aim in life.

The crowd had augmented.

Numbers made it bolder.

Not content with verbally assailing Muldoon, they were throwing things at him.

Not floral tributes, but banana-skins, orange-peel and such like.

When Mrs. Muldoon beheld these indignities which were being offered to her husband her rage knew no bounds.

She grabbed the ear of a ragged urchin who was just about to throw a tomato at the living target, and flung him to the ground.

Then she pressed through the crowd, who saw that she was in dead earnest, and not to be trifled with.

Although they did not know what she was after, they made way for her.

Straight she went to where Muldoon was just getting ready for a fresh volley at the imperturbable pipes.

She caught him by the ear.

"Ye ould fool," hissed she, "come out av here!"

He did not find time to offer any resistance, she acted so suddenly.

The first thing he knew he was deprived of his gun, which Mrs. Muldoon flung on the floor, and grabbed him by the ear.

"Ye come along!" said she.

Muldoon did.

Not very well could he so help doing.

She dragged him along as if he was some disobedient child.

"Oh, ye lunatic!" cried she, "if I don't make ye sweat for this."

"F—f—for what?" inquired he.

"Making a fool av yesilf."

"H—h—how?"

"Niver ye moind, for ye know well enough."

"W—w—what have I done?"

"Ye don't know, do ye?"

"No."

"It is awful innocent can ye be whin ye want to be. The oidea av a man av yez age and stathion in society making a perfect fool out av yesilf."

"Me make a fool out av mesilf?"

"Yis."

"How?"

"By acthing loike a perfect spoiled choild."

"What did I do?"

"Bekase ye could not bbreak ivery poipe in the place in wan shot, ye got mad and made a fool av yesilf."

"Who said so?"

"Roger."

Muldoon mentally vowed to get square with Roger.

"The young villain!" he muttered, "to go and give me away. I'll paralyze him! that is what I will do."

A crowd followed in their wake.

Most of them did not have the faintest idea what was the matter.

All that they perceived was a rather shortish, fat man being lugged along by the organ of hearing by a woman taller than himself.

They didn't care what he had done to incur her vengeance, but, as usual, their sympathies were all on her part.

They testified this fact with their voices.

"Give it to him, missus!"

"Pull his ear off!"

"Tweak his nose!"

"Black his eye!"

"Oh, the old rascal!"

"Been mashing, I bet!"

"That's it! I saw him with a big, handsome woman myself."

"She was a regular stunner."

"Had a red hat on."

"And big kid gloves, which had thirteen buttons on 'em."

"She had a red sun-shade."

"And a bouquet of flowers in her bosom."

"He bought 'em for her, because I seen him do it."

"Oh, the old masher!"

"He ought to be ashamed of himself."

"With such a handsome wife, too."

Mrs. Muldoon knew that she was being chaffed and made game of.

And nothing so further irritates an already angry woman than the consciousness of the fact.

Leaving go of her husband's ear, she turned on the crowd.

At her approach they fled.

Laughingly.

Especially as she had her umbrella raised, presumably to wreak vengeance on her tormentors.

But she did not escape unscathed from their compliments.

"Look out, she's crazy!"

"She looks as if she had the hydrophobia!"

"Run for your lives!"

"Get the women and children out of the way!"

"Where's the constable? She ain't safe to be at liberty. Somebody will get hurt!"

"She ought to be muzzled!"

Mrs. Muldoon had the will, and she also had the muscle, with which to knock any one of her tormentors flat with her umbrella.

Indeed, she started in chase of one who advised her to go home and put a piece of ice on her head for the purpose of cooling off her brain.

Unluckily, she was not as fleet of foot as he, and when she aimed a blow with her parasol at him the blow did not reach its mark.

Instead, he escaped safely with a mocking laugh of derision.

He had cause to laugh.

She overreached herself, and fell prone to the ground. This tickled those who were teasing her more than ever. At a respectful distance they renewed their taunts.

"Something dropped!"

"It's a lady."

"She must be hurt!"

"Send for the doctor."

"Give her smelling-salts."

"She's fainted."

"Send for an ambulance."

Muldoon, it must be confessed, did not weep much over the tumble of his wife.

He thought it just right for the exhibition she had made of him.

But he picked her up, as in duty bound.

She was decidedly subdued.

"Mr. Muldoon," requested she, "take me to some retired place for a little while. I fear that the fall I have received has hurt me internally."

"It wur a wondher it did not bbreak yez neck, and if it did it wud have only served ye roight," said he. "I will conduct you in yon ice-cream pagoda. Will ye hie yesilf hither on me arum? I ain't ashamed av ye if ye did fall down."

He escorted her to the depot for the sale of the frozen dish.

A waiter supplied their wants, and also, for a consideration, brought them a beverage which was supposed to be "cider," no intoxicating beverages being presumed to be sold on the grounds.

If it was cider it was the hardest sort of hard cider, for Muldoon made a wry face, and said it was the worst sort of whisky, calculated to corrode a person's intestines in no time.

With the addition of a liberal quantum of water Muldoon was enabled to swallow his, likewise Mrs. Muldoon.

The potations, though vile, had one good effect.

They put Mrs. Muldoon in a good humor, and after a little morsel of cake she made a proposition which almost took Muldoon's breath away.

It was nothing more or less than that they all proceed to get their pictures taken.

The proposition nearly took Muldoon's breath away.

But as he desired to keep his wife in a good humor he agreed.

The photograph gallery was soon found, it being one of these perambulating affairs mounted on wheels, which when a fair-ground is reached the wheels can be detached from the gallery (?) proper and set on the ground on its wheels.

They entered it.

The proprietor was a brisk, bustling person, with a red nose and a wig.

He was smoothly shaven, and his age was uncertain.

He might have been forty, and he might have been sixty.

But the crows' feet around the corners of his eyes showed that he was old.

To be on the safe side and split the difference, it is safe to say that he could give points to Methusaleh about the art of taking pictures.

For he was what our English cousins call a "downy cove."

He knew just how to flatter people.

With his oiliest smile he welcomed the Muldoon aggregation.

"All to be taken?" asked the proprietor.

"No; just a family group," answered Muldoon, who knew that the Skinners would ring in without the least reluctance if the slightest invitation was extended to them.

The photographer posed them.

He placed them in a family attitude.

Muldoon was depicted as posing over the back of his wife's chair, while Roger stood in the background.

"All ready?" asked the camera fakir.

"Let her go!" said Roger.

He secluded his head beneath the mysterious cloth.

A few minutes later he came back with the picture.

It was simply diabolical.

Muldoon looked like a gorilla.

Mrs. Muldoon resembled an Indian squaw.

As for Roger, he looked like some well-dressed monkey.

At the sight of this remarkable work of art Muldoon could not repress a groan.

His first inclination was to refuse to pay for it.

However, he had realized the futility of making any kick at a fair.

So he paid the fifty cents which was charged for it, and preserved it as a curiosity.

CHAPTER XIII.

MRS. MULDOON continued good-humored.

Her next suggestion fairly appalled her husband.

"Terry," said she, "the fair has done me good."

"And it is meself who is glad av it," gallantly replied he.

"I feel loike a young girl."

"Indade, ye luk loike wan."

"Ye ould flatterer."

"I mane what I say. No wan wud ever take ye fur more than swate sixteen."

"Well, I want to have a swing."

"A swing?"

"Yis."

"What in?"

"The scups."

"For Heaven's sake, Bridget, are ye crazy?"

"No. Why do you ask?"

"Because it is ridiculous."

"What?"

"The oidea av a woman av yez age appearing in public in a scup."

"I don't see anything whrong in it!"

"But people will make all sorts av fun av ye!"

"Let them make. They moind their own business and I will moind moine. I'm going to ride in a scup and that settles it."

He knew that did settle it.

To the scups he went meek as a lamb.

When they arrived there, and Muldoon beheld the scups and their merry loads of human freight flying through the air, he itched to become a scupper too.

"Bridget," he said, "it is not safe for ye to roide in the scups alone."

"Why not?"

"Ye moight fall out."

"Nonsense! Roger can go."

"Roger can have a scup in some other scup. I will go wid ye."

"Ye?"

"Yis."

"But ain't ye too ould? Ye wur just telling me that I wur."

"But ain't it me duty to go wid ye and see that ye don't fall out?"

What was the use of resisting logic like this?

She didn't attempt it.

She clambered into the scup.

"All ready," announced Muldoon, after he had paid his twenty cents for the privilege of being scupped.

Scupping, to those who have not weak stomachs, for the action on such is apt to produce nausea, is a very enjoyable amusement.

The sensation of being gently swung through the air, with the warm breeze fanning one's cheek, is simply delightful.

But if you have a weak stomach never scup, because you will assuredly be sick.

The writer speaks from experience.

His stomach is constituted on a rather shaky basis, and he tried scupping once.

At a grove.

Where he went on a church picnic.

He sat in a scup with several young ladies.

The motion of the scup made him deathly sick.

There was a couple of young ladies sitting opposite to him, and, well, really he could not help it, but he erupted.

He did it as gracefully as he could over the side of the scup, but they discovered his illness.

And they made a terrible fuss about it.

"Shocking!"

"No manners!"

"Nice etiquette."

"I suppose he calls himself a gentleman!"

"Gentleman, indeed!"

"He's a fine specimen of one."

"From Baxter street, probably."

"I wonder how he got on the picnic?"

"Stole his way, probably."

I pretended to pay no attention to their taunts, and walked away from the scup with an air of lofty dignity.

Begging your pardon for this personal digression, we will proceed with the thread of our narrative.

Muldoon and his party did not own feeble stomachs.

It took a good deal to disturb the equilibrium of their gastronomic organs.

Up! up! up!

Down! down! down!

Muldoon enjoyed the novel sensation.

"Shure, ye niver fading daisy," he uttered, "ye are not far wrong. It is a chape way av getting the fresh breeze widout the expense av going to Coney Island."

He even lit a cigar.

He enjoyed the lazy motion.

That is for a while.

A very little while.

Just long enough to enable him to wish it could swing there forever, undisturbed by worldly cares, except that the momentum of the swing occasionally sent sparks from his cigar into his face.

But a little trifle that did not disturb Muldoon.

He adopted an easy remedy.

That of throwing his cigar away.

No sparks got into his eyes after that.

"I tell you, Bedalia," he said—that was one of her pet names when he was pleased at anything (at any other time he was just as liable to call her by the somewhat complimentary name of "Old Crow")—"this is foine!"

" Didn't I tell ye?" she answered. " But ye are so particular."

" How?"

" Ye think that whin ye appear in public ye ought to be conveyed in a silver barouche drawn by camelopards."

At the mention of the animals he looked stunned.

" Mrs. Muldoon?" he asked.

" Well?"

" Where did you get it?"

" What?"

" The wurrud."

" What wurrud?"

" Camelopard."

" Shure, I saw wan wanst."

" Ye did?"

" Yis."

" Where?"

" At a menagerie."

" Spaking av camelopards, it puts an oidea into me head."

" It does?"

" Yis."

" What is it?"

" Whin we get back home I must buy a camelopard."

" Terence!"

" What is it?"

" Is wan av yez mad spells coming on again?"

" No."

" Thin why such a lunatic remark?"

" About what?"

" Purchasing a wold animal loike that."

" Bedalia!"

" Now what is it?"

" Ye are blessed wid a husband av great executive abilities."

" But what has that got to do with the camelopard?"

" Listhen and ye will hear."

" Ain't I listhening? What do ye want the camelopard for?"

" To draw thrade to the grocery."

" To dhray thrade?"

" Yis."

" How in goodness' sake would a camelopard draw thrade to the grocery?"

" I wud buy a Roman chariot loike ye see in the circus, and attach the animal to it."

" For what?"

" To pull it, av coarse."

" But where will he draw it?"

" Through the street."

" But what for?"

" As an advertoisement. I will have a Japanese seated on the front seat, and they will flood the sthreets."

" Flood the sthreets?"

" Yis."

" Wid what?"

" Circulars."

" What sort av circulars?"

" Wans that ye can hurl from the charict, advertising me grocery. It is wan av the biggest advertoising oideas ever thought av and will make me rich."

Mrs. Muldoon did not enthuse for a cent.

" If ye thried such a scheme I wud have ye sint to an asylum for the insane," she promised, " and—"

Crack!

Crack!

Crack!

It was the sound of breaking timbers.

And timbers had broke.

The timbers of which the scup was composed.

Down to the ground went the scup.

Resultantly down to the ground went our party.

They were spilled out over the ground in the most ludicrous manner.

Mrs. Muldoon, to make an Irish bull, was the first man up.

Next Roger followed.

Not so Muldoon.

He lay where he fell.

Apparently he was stunned.

There was a crowd gathered around him in minute. Exclamations filled the air:

" He's killed!"

" His neck is broken!"

" No, his back!"

" See how heavily he breathes!"

" He will only live a few minutes!"

" Where's a doctor?"

Mrs. Muldoon, to use an inelegant expression, " flopped down" by his side.

" Spake to me, Terry," she begged; " are ye dead?" Needless to say he was not.

He possessed the lives of a whole family of cats.

But, the old rogue, he concluded to sham that he was.

" Me woife," he said, in feeble accents, " I feel that me last moment has arroived."

" Don't talk that way, mavourneen. Where are ye hurt?"

" In me head."

" Yez head?"

" Yis."

" Ain't that a fatal spot to be hurt in?"

" Yis. Soon ye will be a widow, and, me love—" The " me love" affected Mrs. Muldoon's tears.

" Don't say so," she begged.

" How can I help it? I feel a premonition that me sands av loife are rapidly running out. Did ivor ye see an hour-glass?"

" Yis."

" Did iver ye notice how each grain av sand slowly ebbs away?"

" Yis."

" To employ a metaphor, I am the hour-glass, and me sands av loife are ebbing away."

" No, no!" sobbed Mrs. Muldoon. " Shan't I sind for a minister?"

" Not yet!" he hastily said. " I think I won't die immediately. Spinal injuries like mesilf has gained frequently last for hours before the victim finally expoires. Whin ye see me eyelids slowly closing, thin is toime to sind for a black-coat-and-a-whoite-tie. Bridget?"

" Yis, mavourneen."

" I want to lave direchions wid ye about me funeral."

" Oh, Terry!"

" What's the matter?"

" What will I do whin ye are dead?"

" Marry again."

At this cold-blooded remark she nearly went into hysterics.

" Oh, Terry!"

" Well, av coarse, now that I am able yet to speake, I want, as a matter av personal pride, to have a funeral."

" Yis."

" Thin listhen to me."

" I am."

" I want the masons to all walk in a line wid t aprons on."

" Yis."

" And I belong to the Odd Fellows."

" Yis."

" Also the Red Men."

" I think so."

" And the Knights av Pythias."

" I do."

" Also the Elks."

" So ye tould me."

" And the Ancient Ordher av Foresters."

"Yis."

"And the Foresters."

"Yis."

"Likewoise the Buffaloes."

"I cannot deny it, because ye are the greatest man for belonging to saycret ordhers that I iver heard tell av. I belave that if an ordher av a saycret koind wur formed for the purpose av burning up our grocery sthore ye wud join it."

"Me wish is this: that they all march in a body behoind me hearse in full regalia. Av course no bouquets to be worn, but badges av crape on the left arum. Will ye promise me ye will carry out me last wishes?"

CHAPTER XIV.

NEEDLESS to say she promised.

Hardly had she done so before a gentleman appeared in black.

By the cut of his jib it could be seen that he was either a clergyman or a physician.

He proved to be the latter.

He ordered Muldoon to be carried into a tent.

That gentleman groaned all of the time he was being carried there.

There was a cot in the tent into which he was borne.

On this he was laid.

The doctor examined his patient.

The result of his examination seemed puzzling to him.

"My friend," he inquired, in a professional tone, "what ails you? You're all right."

"Me back is bhroke," explained Muldoon.

"It is?"

"Yis."

"How did it happen?"

"I fell out av a scup."

"You did?"

"Yis."

"But what ever possessed you to get into a scup?"

"It wur at the instigathion av me woife. She said that she felt as young as a newly-fledged bluebird, and wanted to go scupping. I begged her not to, but it wur av no avail."

"Why?"

"Are ye married?"

A shade of sadness enveloped the face of the doctor.

"I am," he answered, in sepulchral accents.

Muldoon extended his hand.

"Shake," he said.

The doctor fully understood the purport of his remarks.

"She's boss, ain't she?"

Muldoon vowed that she was.

"How much?" he continued.

"What for?"

"Your medical attendance?"

The doctor looked offended.

"That's all right," he said, "we will have a small libation and call it square."

Needless to say the proposal was accepted.

The doctor was in due time introduced to Mrs. Muldoon. That lady made herself very agreeable after finding out what he had done for her husband.

They walked together, he carrying her red parasol over her head in a way which was certainly most gallant.

Muldoon followed on behind.

He felt that he was left out—that his society could well be dispensed with.

He was intensely jealous of his wife, although he would ave cut his arm off before he would have owned it.

The attentions of the doctor increased toward Mrs. Muldoon.

"Won't you have some ice-cream?" the doctor queried.

Did any one ever see a woman who could resist the temptation of ice-cream in summer.

Or likewise oysters in winter.

Never.

Hardly ever.

(Excuse the chestnut, but as there seems to be a general revival of "chestnut" gags all over, it is always well to be on deck.)

The doctor with the utmost courtesy seated Mrs. Muldoon on a chair and then took one himself.

As for Muldoon, he had to get a chair for himself.

He obtained one.

But it could not be called an eighteen-caret chair.

It was rickety.

Evidently a veteran of several years of saloon service. He sat down on it.

What might be expected followed.

The chair was not built for heavy weights.

He found it out.

Down he went with a thump.

He landed on the floor, of course.

To the great surprise of the other ice-cream eaters, who did not know but that maybe the roof had fallen in.

Mrs. Muldoon, with the assistance of a waiter, picked him up.

"Terry," she asked, "what ails ye?"

"Nothing," groaned Muldoon, gritting his teeth.

"Nothing?"

"No."

"Thin why did ye fall down?"

"On account av the chair."

"The chair?"

"Yis."

"What ailed it?"

"It could not support a flea."

"But ye ain't a flea."

"I know I ain't," he uttered, "but I want to see wher runs this restaurant, if it can be called so."

"What for?" she asked.

"Me blood is up."

"Is it?"

"Yis."

"Well, what about it?"

"I want to murdher him."

"Ye do?"

"Yis."

"For what?"

"Giving me a chair loike that. I moight have killed myself."

Mrs. Muldoon did not appear much alarmed at the intelligence.

"We all have to meet death," said she, "and those possessed av a guilty conscience moight just as well meet it at one toime as another. If I wur you I wud not talk about meeting death with a clear conscience."

"Ye would not?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"How many toimes whin I left the grocery wid ye in charge have I counted the cash?"

"I'm sure I don't know."

"But I do."

"How?"

"Bekase ivery toime I came back there wur four or foive dollars missing, and ye wud appear the next wake, asther ye thought me memory was failing, in a new wrap."

That settled it.

She concluded it was wise to subside.

The party were gathered together and returned home.

The whole party behaved well on the way home.

Even the mule.

But in a confidential conversation which I had with Muldoon he confided to me his intention never to leave Gotham again.

"New York is good enough for me," said he.

And a few days later found him there.

[THE END.]

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